

Matthew 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (NRSV).

The Scripture is very well known; it's a story that is located in all four of the gospels. In my perspective, it is the most special event in all of history. It confirms the divinity of Jesus and it confirms God's love and grace. It is the most special day in the whole year as we celebrate the Good News of the resurrection. If I had my say in the matter, Easter would be called the Day of Resurrection. Today we celebrate the fact that he is risen indeed.

This is the climax of a biblical story about God's love. It is important for us to understand that God's love is based on a relationship with humanity. It is also very important for us to understand and remember that God's love is sacrificial love and the ultimate love is a love that is willing to sacrifice for another. There are several things that make this event special. One is a matter of who Jesus is – Jesus is the Son of God – this means that this love is divine love. Another important factor is what God actually did. God took the initiative to reach out to us in love. It is a very special act of love because of the presence of Jesus. Another special consideration is a matter of what Jesus did. Jesus sacrificed himself for us through his death and resurrection. Through God's effort of redemption, we get a blessing from God. Like a father blesses his son, we got the blessing! This is the most important blessing ever.

I take the opportunity to point out the mentality of the followers of Jesus. At this particular time, they are in a state of shock from witnessing the death of Jesus. To publicly raise a body up into the air on a hill is traumatic. It is a public display of torture designed to control the population through fear. The followers of Jesus are full of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. They focus on the immediate events as they are happening. As a consequence, they are not focused on the blessing. When someone is traumatized, they lose their ability to pay attention to other factors going on around them because the immediate events demand their attention. They are not in a position to consider the movement and momentum that has led them to this point. They have either forgotten, or fail to consider, the physical and spiritual journey that has gotten them to this place. The disciples, being distracted by the trauma have forgotten that Jesus said he would be resurrected.

The women have a different perspective. They had the same shocking experience as the disciples and are also in a state of mourning. However, they have stayed with Jesus at the cross and are now at the tomb to tend to his body and care for him. The women are the first to receive the news that he has been raised. They are the first to receive the joy of his resurrection. This makes them, the first to receive rewards of the love from the cross.

What we have on Resurrection Sunday is pastoral care on a divine level. An angel invites the women to come and see for yourself, you are an eye witness. See where he lay. The angel is providing pastoral care from God. The angel is a voice of reason and a calm presence in the turmoil of life. God extends pastoral care to the world through Jesus. God offers a relationship of love and care through presence, knowledge, guidance, and support. The angel continues a ministry of availability. Though the tomb is empty, divine presence is still there. The angel offers support not pity. The angel reduces anxiety and offers a personal caring relationship. The divine presence and pastoral care allow the women to see the bigger picture. Jesus is about divine presence in the world. Come and see, look the tomb is empty, he is divine, and he has been raised.

Through the resurrection of Jesus, we get the Good News. We get God's blessing! A blessing is one of the most important things in a relationship. A blessing is approval, acceptance, and love. My father was in the Seabees during World War 2. At the time, the Seabees was a new construction unit for combat zones. They served as an element of the Marine Corps. They were trained by the Marines for shore duty. They were one the islands with the Marines in the combat zone together while the rest of the Navy was out at sea. My brother Harry joined the Navy and I joined the Marines. Years later we were talking and he said something that totally surprised me. He said that he now realized that he joined the Navy to try to seek dad's approval. I told him that dad was in the Seabees, he liked the Marines.

A biblical example of the significance of the blessing is Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the oldest son of Isaac and he was ready to receive his father's blessing. This was to be a great event in his life. It was a tremendous gift to hear words of future encouragement, love, and acceptance. It was of the highest value for a sense of worth. It was the grand prize in a parent and child relationship. However, Isaac's blessing went to Jacob and Esau was devastated.

We have received God's blessing. This is the best thing ever. Today we celebrate receiving God's blessing. Jesus adopts us into the family of God as if God says "He is my Son and I am well pleased and you are my child too." This is something to be proud of. It is a very positive relationship that makes us feel really good. When you receive the blessing, everything in life fits together. Life struggles are eased, temptation is gone, desires for materialism is significantly diminished, as these things are replaced with love, peace, and unity. Today we celebrate the day we got the blessing! The Lord Jesus has been raised from the grave. As a child of God we celebrate the Good News; he is risen indeed!