



Easter Sunday  
April 5, 2026  
Matthew 28:1-10

The earth shakes on Easter morning.

The Gospel of Matthew does not ease us into resurrection with birdsong and soft light. Matthew opens the story with the ground convulsing beneath the women's feet. An angel descends like lightning. The stone groans as it rolls away. Guards collapse in fear.

These seismic details are unique to Matthew's resurrection narrative. Earthquakes appear at pivotal moments throughout this Gospel: Jerusalem trembles when Jesus enters on Palm Sunday, the earth quakes when Jesus dies on Good Friday, and again here on Easter morning. As Carol Prickett wrote in [last week's lectionary reflection](#), "Three times Matthew reminds us: God's power can shake the whole world. God's power can also remake it."

Matthew wants us not only to know but to feel that something has shifted in the foundations of reality. Before this morning, the rules of the world seemed painfully clear. Empires rise and crush their opponents. The struggle for justice falters and fails. Love blooms and breaks. And eventually death closes the curtain.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb expecting the world to behave the way it always has, expecting the certainty of death. They carry spices and sorrow, ready to perform the final act of love for the one they followed.

Then the earth shakes and the angel speaks what was once impossible: “He is not here; for he has been raised.”

The women leave the tomb, Matthew says, “with fear and great joy.”

Joy, because Christ is alive. Fear, because if Christ is alive, everything is different, new, and disorienting.

In his Westminster Bible Companion commentary on Matthew, Thomas Long describes the women at the empty tomb as “the church in miniature.” They embody the church’s first response to resurrection: trembling, joyful, bewildered, but moving forward.

**In many ways, these women are us: trying to make sense of a world that is shaking.**

New and dangerous wars are erupting. Anger pulses through public life. Communities fracture along lines of suspicion and fear. Institutions we once trusted to last forever feel fragile. It can feel easier to believe the old certainty — that violence, power, and despair will have the final word.

Historian Howard Zinn believes otherwise, writing, “To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.”

Again and again, Zinn observed, the seemingly invincible power of those with “the guns and the money” has proven vulnerable to quieter forces: “moral fervor, determination, unity, organization, sacrifice, wit, ingenuity, courage, patience—whether by [Black people] in Alabama and South Africa, peasants in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Vietnam, or workers and intellectuals in Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union itself. No cold calculation of the balance of power need deter people who are persuaded that their cause is just.” (See: Paul Rogat Loeb, [The Impossible Will Take a Little While: Perseverance and Hope in Troubled Times](#))

Easter bolsters this hope and proclaims something even more radical. The tomb that should have sealed the ending becomes the place where God begins again. Christ died. Christ rose. And suddenly the old certainty – that death always wins – no longer holds.

The women at the tomb are not invited to sit down and process the theological implications of resurrection. The angel sends them immediately: “Go quickly and tell his disciples.”

Before they fully understand what has happened, they are already entrusted with the message.

Easter is not only the celebration we have awaited through the long weeks of Lent, our chance to sing songs of praise, fill our sanctuaries with lilies, and the children already hunted for chocolate eggs but, maybe they didn't get the why of eggs. It is also our commissioning.

Go and tell. Go and tell that death does not have the final word. Go and tell that love is stronger than violence. Go and tell that God is still remaking this shaking world.

The powers that seem immovable have been shaken before. Courage, sacrifice, compassion, and hope have turned the course of human history. And Easter declares that beneath all those human tremors lies a deeper one — the earthquake of God's resurrection power.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed.

## Questions for reflection on Matthew 28:1-10

1. The women leave the tomb with "fear and great joy." Where do you see that same mixture of emotions in your own faith or in the life of the church today?
2. The angel tells the women to "go and tell" before they fully understand what has happened. Where might

God be inviting you to move forward in faith even without complete certainty?

3. Easter shakes the old certainty that death and violence always win. Where in our world today do you see signs of resurrection — moments where compassion, courage or hope are remaking what seemed impossible?