

## *The Women at the Tomb*

We are entering the climactic portion of Holy Week. This is Good Friday, observed as the anniversary of Christ's death on the cross.

It recalls the blackest moment in all of history. The Son of God, the Sacrificial Lamb who had come to save man from his sins, was rejected, falsely tried, sentenced and nailed to a cross, to be lifted between heaven and earth.

When He died, nature reacted violently.

Darkness – suddenly, strangely – covered the earth. An earthquake shook the region, and rocks were rent. Graves were opened, “and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city, and appeared to many,” Matthew tells us in his Gospel.

So Jesus, bearing our sins, died. But death and the grave could not keep Him. He arose!

Matthew provides a riveting account of that first Easter morning in his 28<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 1-8:

*“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.*

*“But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.’ So they went quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.”*

Max Lucado, minister and author, offers a compelling insight into the actions of the two Marys in this story. In his book *Grace for the Moment*, he writes: “It isn't hope that leads Mary and Mary Magdalene up the mountain to the tomb. It is duty. Naked devotion. They expect nothing in return. What could Jesus give? What could a dead man offer? The two women are not climbing the mountain to receive, they are going to the tomb to give. Period.

“There is no motivation more noble ... Service prompted by duty. This is the call of discipleship.”

(more)

Mary and Mary knew a task had to be done. Jesus' body had to be prepared for burial. Peter didn't offer to do it. Andrew didn't volunteer. So the two Marys decided to do it.

"I wonder if halfway to the tomb they had sat down and reconsidered," Lucado mused. "What if they'd looked at each other and shrugged, 'What's the use?' What if they had given up? What if one had thrown up her arms in frustration and bemoaned, 'I'm tired of being the only one who cares. Let Andrew do something for a change. Let Nathaniel show some leadership.'"

"Whether or not they were tempted to, I'm glad they didn't quit. That would have been tragic. You see, we know something they didn't. We know the Father was watching. Mary and Mary thought they were alone. They weren't. They thought their journey was unnoticed. They were wrong. God knew."

Service prompted by duty. That's our call of discipleship today in Life Care and Century Park. And we know the Father is watching; our journey is not unnoticed.

In His resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for every person who believes in Him to defeat death and to gain new and everlasting life. The glory of that Easter truth will be celebrated throughout the world this Sunday.

Hallelujah! Christ arose.

*Jesus said to her (Martha, the sister of Lazarus), "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter