

# Easter Sunday – April 5, 2026

*Matthew 28:1-10*

When we gathered on Shrove Tuesday, we feasted on some pancakes like we did this morning, and I had you all write your alleluias down. We put them in a box. And we metaphorically buried them. Said a brief farewell to this word that we exclaim joyfully today. Would it surprise you to know that box is empty today? Our alleluias are out and free for all to see.

40+ days without this word that we shout and ring loudly this morning. It was a solemn tradition to recognize the journey to the cross. But the journey doesn't end at the cross. And our alleluias don't stay buried.

We gather this morning to celebrate the news the women come to share Jesus is no longer dead but has defeated death and rose again. Alleluia! We gather this morning after 40+ days of knowing this was coming. And yet every year it's still so exciting to rejoice once again at the empty tomb. This is the day that our Christian faith is all about.

But can you imagine that first Easter? After the spectacle of Jesus death on Friday, can you imagine the feelings of the disciples? They never quite understood what Jesus meant when he told them he was going to rise again. The disciples inability to comprehend what Jesus was always going on about often gives me faith in humanity today, considering how much we mess up in our discipleship. If they were that dense with Jesus right in front of them, it's understandable why we struggle with scripture and miss the mark at times.

But anyway, there's the women. The women are often so ignored in our retellings of the resurrection. We like to talk about the empty tomb, the guards struck down, and Jesus appearing to the disciples. But there were other characters at play here. The women faithfully showed up at dawn. Some gospel accounts have them coming to finish preparing the body. Matthew here just has them coming to see the tomb. But it wasn't the men who showed up. It was the women.

Did they show up to prepare the body? Did they show up to mourn? Did they show up because they remembered what Jesus had said? We can only speculate and the gospel accounts don't all agree. But they faithfully came that morning following the sabbath. Whatever their inspiration was. They showed up out of devotion to their savior.

And what a shock they were in for. An earthquake. Guards passing out from fear. An angel appearing, moving the rock, and then just lounging on top of the stone to share the news to the women. Go and look, the place where Jesus was laid is empty. But do not fear. He is risen just like he said.

Can you imagine?! The shock of seeing the angel. Witnessing the empty tomb. And then bearing the responsibility to go and share this news. The women left with fear and joy. What a combination of emotions that sounds just right. Fear and joy. They don't know what this means. They don't know where Jesus is yet. All they know is that things were about to change. And change they did.

After Jesus appeared to them and they worshipped him, they went and shared the news that our faith leans on. The news of a resurrected Jesus. They not only had the angels account. They not only had the empty tomb. They witnessed Jesus alive and in front of them. They knew it to be true. And shared that good news.

Because of their faithful witness, we gather this morning to rejoice. To shout our alleluias, see the empty tomb, and proclaim our savior risen and alive. The foundation of our faith, that Jesus destroyed death and hell so that we didn't have to face the same outcome. So now that Jesus has set us free, now that we know he is alive and death has lost its sting, where do we go from here?

Do we come to the resurrection with the same fear and joy the women did some 2000 years ago? What does it mean to you, that you have been redeemed? What do we do with our faith without the fear of eternal death?

That's for us to ponder as we leave here today. We have the good news at the palm of our hands. We don't need to experience the earthquake and angel. We

don't need to experience the death and resurrection firsthand, because we have these faithful witnesses who shared the good news for us. We get to live as followers of a risen lord. We get to live out his commands of loving one another as he has loved us – the command we just heard on the night he was handed over. And what greater love is Jesus' love for us?

Go out today, live like the women did as they left the empty tomb. Go out with fear and joy. Because God is still at work doing some wonderful things for us, and through us. The story didn't end at the cross. And it doesn't end at the empty tomb either. Amen.