

## Matthew 28:1-10

In our entire Easter Gospel account, the only words that are spoken are from the mouth of God. The angel speaks and Jesus speaks. The two Mary's are strangely silent. In fact, in the entire chapter of Matthew 28 not one word is spoken by any of Jesus' followers. Let's go back even farther. From the time that Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, through His trial, and crucifixion, and resurrection, all the way to His ascension forty days later, the only words which St. Matthew records that are spoken by a disciple of Jesus come from the mouth of Peter when he denies his Lord: "*I do not know the man!*" Jesus' enemies speak. The chief priests, Pilate, the mob. But nothing from Jesus' followers throughout His entire Passion and Resurrection except for words of denial. It's as if God simply took over. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus' disciples saying one ignorant thing after another, doing one ignorant thing after another. What is God to say and do in response? He suffers, He dies, He rises from the dead, and He speaks the good news of Easter's triumph to His tongue-tied disciples.

I think that if we are honest, we need to confess that we are just like them. We are just as bumbling, as doubting, as denying, yes, as ignorant with our choice of words and actions as Jesus' disciples were back then. Oh we look sharp today. We sing well, we're attentive. But we should realize that Easter Sunday is hardly the true mark of a disciple. It's what that disciple shows himself to be all the other days and Sundays of the year. And we, like the Twelve and the two Mary's, have shown pretty well that, for us too, it's time for God to take over.

And He does. Early on Easter morning there is a great earthquake. An angel of the Lord rolls away the stone from the tomb and sits on it, and everyone is terrified. The guards...they tremble and become like dead men it says. And the two Mary's are frightened. But look at how God takes over. His angel speaks, not to the soldiers who are deathly afraid...he speaks to the women and says, "*Fear not.*" He does not ask them questions. He does not demand an account from them. He simply and quickly goes through their ears to their hearts with the message that Jesus is risen from the dead.

All of us are here today with stories that could fill volumes. We are here, like the two women, with our own set of fears. We have juggled our household, maybe our finances, and somehow we manage to land on our feet. We are here today as disciples who are full of regrets. We wish we could take back words we have said, deeds we have done. We have come to that point in our lives where we need to recognize the truth that it's time for God to take over. Isn't that why He has drawn you here today? You are not the soldiers who trembled like dead men and to whom the angel had nothing to say. You are the women, the disciples, the baptized, who are given words full of good news. God, through His angel, His messenger, says to you today, "*Fear not...you seek Jesus who was crucified...He has risen from the dead.*"

Now maybe these words have lost some of their luster over time. It's not as if we, like the two Mary's, are hearing them for the first time in our life. We heard these same words last Easter, and the year before that. Some of us have heard these words fifty, and sixty or more years in a row. We know Jesus lives. It's not headline news for us anymore. He is risen, but tomorrow morning our alarm clock will still send us off to work or to school, We will still go back to our old set of problems. Jesus lives, but my bills still have to be paid. Jesus lives, but I'm still on the outs with my relative or my neighbor. Jesus may have risen, but I still have guilt and regrets when I lay my head down on my pillow. Is this all there is to Easter? Admitting, yes, Jesus is alive, but then living with the same fears, the same problems, the same guilt as before?

Look at the rest of the words the angel spoke to the two Mary's: "*Behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him.*" The message from the angel to the women was not, "Jesus has risen, now go and have a nice day." His message was clear--that this risen Jesus was going before them and would meet them in Galilee. Suddenly the road to Galilee did not seem all that bad. Jesus would meet them there. Going back to their old way of life would now have new meaning, for the risen Jesus would meet them. They would still have problems. They would still face bills, and sickness, even death and tears. But all these are overshadowed by the truth that Jesus would be meeting them in Galilee.

Friend, where is your Galilee? You're sitting in it. There are people out there who are aware that it's Easter. They know that Jesus lives. But Easter is not just knowing that Jesus is alive. It's meeting the risen Christ in Galilee, because in Galilee is where He goes before us to meet us. Faith is not head-knowledge. Faith is living in the presence of the risen Lord. And our risen Lord has promised that He will meet us in our Galilee. Where His Word is proclaimed in truth, where His Sacraments are rightly offered, there is our Galilee where the risen Christ meets us today. Isn't that why we are here? We are not here for the music, as beautiful as it is today. We are not here for the breakfast, as tasty as it will be. We are here because this is Galilee and the risen Jesus has told us to go to Galilee, for this is where He meets us.

All of us have been walking along different roads. Some of our roads have taken us through a trail of tears. Other roads have left us confused and upset. All of our roads have been walked by disciples who are sinful, having turned our backs on God. Today, my friends, God is taking over. He has brought you on your road here to Galilee and the risen Jesus meets you with every comfort and blessing, with forgiveness for you, and with life, a life lived with hope and purpose. It does not matter where your road has led you in the past. All is forgiven. You cannot take back the bad words you have spoken, nor the sinful deeds you have done. But it's okay. Jesus took them to His cross for you. He died, and you are forgiven. He now lives, and you are blessed by His presence. He meets you here in Galilee, and you find that you can handle the stress of next week's problems. He meets you here in Galilee, and you discover that your burden of guilt is being lifted because He carries it for you. The risen Christ meets you here in Galilee, and you are prepared for whatever life throws at you, even death and sorrow.

If it was only up to us, we would never get to Galilee. We would go everywhere but to Galilee. But God is merciful. In love, He takes over. And He brings us here to Galilee, not just today on Easter Sunday, but often, faithfully, so that the blessings and gifts of the risen Christ belong to us not just today, but always. Thank God for Easter. And thank God for our Galilee. He is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.