

Speak Against Death!

Sermon for Easter Sunday

Sermon Text: Matthew 28:1-10



¹ Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him.

See I have told you." ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and 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, and there they will see me."

What a contrast and how anticlimactic! After Jesus was horribly crucified and after the enormous stone over the grave was rolled away like a die and after the soldiers fell over as though dead from fright, an angel sits on the stone that was just rolled away as if nothing has happened and he were just waiting on a bus that goes into town. For the angel, the dramatic resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the rolling of a great stone from the grave really belongs to everyday business! The angel can see that which is hidden from our eyes. The angels became witnesses as Adam and Eve fell into sin, as they also became witnesses of the many mistakes of mankind. But they also became witnesses of the many prophetic words of about Jesus. Unlike we mortals, they see all the world events from God's perspective, and they could understand God's plan from the beginning. And the wonderful thing about the Easter story is exactly this. An angel comes into our mortal world and sits upon a stone. And that is definitely not a coincidence. His job is to open our eyes on this earth to things that otherwise must remain hidden for earthly people. The first people that he must inform were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Well knowing what a fright these two women would receive when they saw his special, radiant outfit, he sits

on a stone without threatening behavior and tells the women not to be afraid. And above all, these women should be the first to know what's going on: You seek the One who was crucified! But He isn't here! He is risen! Come see with your own eyes where He lay.

Dear congregation! What the angel did on this first Easter Sunday, was something that the women at the grave could pass on! Generations after them could also do that. We can do that today too. We have the great privilege and responsibility to pass on what remains hidden for other people. Jesus was dead! But see, He lives! Jesus also lives to this day! And that's exactly what we should pass on to as many people as possible. Because God sent the angel exactly for this purpose! God wants us to know that Jesus is risen! God wants us to know that death does not have the last word! God wants us to know that eternity has begun in our time. That which is hidden for mortal people should be revealed. It should be revealed that Jesus is the life. And it should be revealed that Jesus gives us life! Because Jesus is the life, death can't hold us forever. People tried to kill Jesus. They couldn't do it. For generations, people now try to kill the Church and Christians. Still to this day. Many generations have tried it. They persecuted the Church. They imprisoned Christians! They tortured them to death! And yet the church continually grew amid persecution more than ever. It can't be any different. Because when we live with Jesus, we are dealing with the author and founder of life. Everything that Jesus is and everyone that comes into contact with Him will of course also carry Jesus' life within them. And that's why nothing in this world can frighten us anymore.

The angel at Jesus' grave, the first disciples, and we who live today, are commissioned by God to talk against death and to act against death. We should speak against all the terrible news! We may also speak against sickness and death that knock at our door. We may say it all! I know that death and all its side effects are terrible! I know that there are many people who go through life with their heads down because they have no more hope. Satan has many tools with which he can bring us down. For one, it's drugs. With another, it's hopelessness because everything he tries is wrecked by rejection. No chance to find work! No chance to build a future! With still others, it's love and therefore their trust in people has been destroyed. They can no longer laugh from their hearts! They can no longer talk about what moves them. All these things are the condition of our world. And they want to sink us into the grave of depression and hopelessness. We are exactly like the women who went to Jesus' tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were convinced that Jesus was dead. They only wanted to honor the dead body. They were so convinced of death! When we are in a crisis or when something bad happens, we can only see the bad that is directly before our eyes. We are convinced and dejected by the events and can't see at all that there is also another side. And that's exactly why the angel came. He calls to the women and us so that we can see all the suffering from God's perspective. "Don't be afraid!" Death doesn't have the last word! Don't be afraid! Jesus lives! And because Jesus lives, you also will live. No matter what situation you are in right now. For you, the seal is broken. The great heavy stone is rolled away from your heart. And an angel sits on a stone nearby and confirms: baptized in the name Jesus! Only life applies to you! And absolutely nothing else should determine your life. Besides the living Jesus Himself! Even if an atomic bomb would shatter our entire world into a million pieces, then this power would be nothing compared to the power that raised Jesus from the dead! And even if billions of voices say to you, you must die! Your life is meaningless! You have no chance to build a life for yourself! Then all these words are nothing against the words that say: "You look for Jesus. He is not here. He is risen!" When we humans encounter something from God's world, we are shocked and we feel insecure. That's why angels must always loudly proclaim: "Fear not!" The angels had to do that at the birth of Jesus. And

as Jesus calmed the stormy sea, He had to also say: "Fear not!" What a miracle when you and I may hear these words. Especially at the place where heaven and earth meet. What a miracle when I may finally see Jesus together with God after a long life and burdened with many mistakes and sins. And there will also be many angels sitting around who say: "Fear not!" Fear not for different laws apply now. On earth, death has the final word. And with death, everything that is precious to you becomes null and void. In the end, death declares us meaningless! When I see Jesus face to face, none of that matters anymore. Because then the Resurrected One will have the final word. He who died for your sin and weakness is raised from the dead for your benefit. It is Jesus who also has the final word over your life. And there is no word in heaven or hell that can say anything against this Jesus: Fear not! Amen.