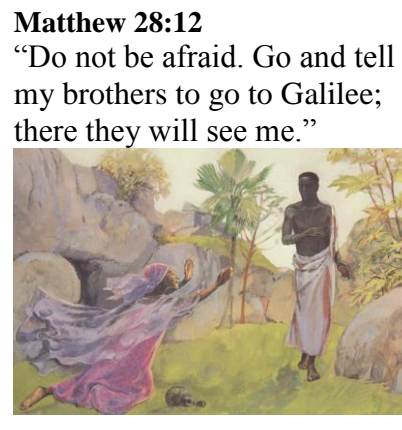


By Rev. Helen Harper:

Rev. Harper is the Priest at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Niagara Falls.

Do Not Be Afraid – Even Now

During the darkness in the morning chill of the third day after Jesus' death, several women arrive at his tomb. They were there to prepare Jesus' body for burial, a specific role of women in this society at this time. As followers of Jesus in his lifetime, the women wanted to be as faithful to Jesus in death. The women had intended to make this one thing right, in a world where days ago they believed everything had gone hopelessly wrong.



Matthew 28:12
“Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

As the women approach the tomb they were confronted by an angel whose appearance, we are told in Matthew's Gospel, was like lightening, and whose clothing was as white as snow! But even in all their grief and terror, rather than run away, they stayed, and listened to the angel's message, and what a glorious message it was. What they heard was this: *“Do not be afraid...Jesus who was crucified...has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him.”* They wondered how this was even possible when three days earlier they had watched Jesus die on the cross. So they left the empty tomb with mixed feelings of fear and joy. And they brought the good news of Jesus' resurrection--a message of hope--to the other disciples. Then Jesus himself appeared to the disciples, and they were able to see Jesus once again, this time in his resurrected body. They saw Jesus with their own eyes and believed that he, once again, lived among them. So they worshiped him with pure joy.

And even now while our fear and anxieties about the future continue and overflow into the various parts of our daily living in isolation, even now the message of Easter is the same for us as it was on that first Easter day: *“Do not be afraid. Jesus who was crucified is Risen as he said.”*

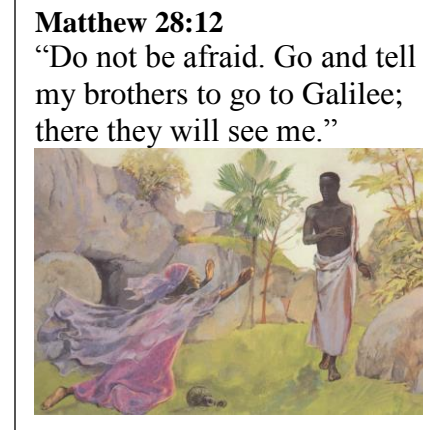
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Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

Jesus Has Risen

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Other Texts for the Resurrection can be found at:

[Mark 16:1-11](#)

[Luke 24:1-12](#)

[John 20:1-18](#)

Image: Easter - Christ appears to Mary, by JESUS MAFA, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

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