

Easter Sunrise
St. John's Chapel

The Very Rev. Dr. Jennifer L. Lazzuri
April 5, 2026

Matthew 28: 1-10

There is something different about gathering at sunrise.
We come in the quiet.
In the stillness.
In that space between darkness and light.

The world is not fully awake yet —and some of us may barely be.

And this is exactly where Easter begins. Not fully in the light. Not with certainty — but in the in-between space —

As I read over the Gospel passage for this morning, the word fear stood out to me.

“For **fear of him** the guards shook and became like dead men.”
“But the angel said, “Do not be **afraid**”.”
“They left the tomb quickly with **fear...** (and great joy).

and then the words of Jesus, “**Do not be afraid.**”

I don't know if you can recall a time when you were afraid. I had to search my brain for a time when I felt afraid. There have been a few times sailing when I have thought, “Uh oh — this could go south quickly” —and there was the brief pounding of my heart until the boat righted or the weather shifted. I have not been afraid for my own safety in quite some time — though as a mother — we spend sometime being fearful for our children that

something could happen to them — but the fear that the Mary Magdalene felt — and the other Mary — the fear of having no idea what was happening — because what they were experiencing and feeling defied what they knew and thought of natural law... I cannot remember when I have felt that type of fear. The fear of something happening that defied explanation and what I understood as the natural order of things.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb in grief. Questions on their hearts. They are not expecting resurrection.

They are carrying grief.
They are carrying loss.
They are carrying the finality of death.

They go to the tomb because, as far as they know, the story is over.

And then—the earth shakes.
An angel descends.
The stone is rolled away.
The guards tremble.

And the first words spoken into this moment are not explanation, not theology—but this:
“Do not be afraid.”

Because fear is always the first response when the world as we know it begins to change.

The angel tells them:
“He is not here; for he has been raised.”
Not resuscitated.
Not returned to what was before.

Raised.
Something new has happened.

Psalm 114 asks what appears to be a very strange question this morning:

*“What ailed you, O sea, that you fled?
O Jordan, that you turn back?”*

You mountains that you skipped like rams? You little hills like young sheep?

Because when God acts— the earth — creation itself can seem to recoil —the natural order can be shaken.

The sea parts.

The river turns.

The earth trembles.

And now—on this morning—the tomb is opened.

The ground shakes again.

Because resurrection is not just a quiet, spiritual idea.
It is a cosmic event.
It is creation itself responding to the power of God.

The women do not stay at the tomb.

“They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy.”

Fear—and joy—together.

Because resurrection does not immediately erase fear.

It meets us in it. It transforms it. Resurrection provides hope even while our spirits and body may still be catching up.

Hope, resurrection — does not immediately dispel fear.

The women that day experienced Fear and joy together.

And maybe there have been times in your life where you hopeful of what may lay ahead — the road you cannot see, and yet fearful of the unknown. Its okay to hold those two things together.

Then something else happens.

Jesus meets them. Not in the tomb. Not in the safety of stillness.

But on the way.

“Greetings,” he says.

So simple. So ordinary.

“What? Greetings??!! Is that all you got to say? GREETINGS?!!!”

Everything has changed. JESUS — The Jesus we saw crucified is alive.

They take hold of him.

They worship him.

And again, he says:

“Do not be afraid.”

This is where Romans 6 speaks directly into this moment—and into our lives.

“We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Easter is not just about what happened to Jesus.
It is about what happens to us.
We are drawn into this story.
His death becomes our death.
His life becomes our life. We too can have newness of life.

The resurrection is not something we only witness.
It is something we are invited to live.

But here is the truth:

Most of us do not feel “resurrected” all at once.
We still carry grief.
We still carry fear.
We still carry uncertainty.

Like those women at the tomb, we live in that strange mixture—
fear and joy,
doubt and hope,
darkness and light.

And yet—
the stone has already been rolled away.
Death does not have the final word.

The world tells us that endings are final.
That loss defines us.
That what is broken stays broken.

But Easter tells a different story.

Easter tells us that God is always at work bringing life out of death.

That what we think is finished—
God is not finished with.

And so this morning, as the sun rises—
we do not simply remember something that happened long ago.
We stand inside it.
We stand in a world where the tomb is empty.
Where Christ is risen.
Where new life has already begun.
Even if we cannot fully see it yet.
Even if we are still learning how to trust it.

So hear the words spoken to the women—spoken now to us:

Do not be afraid.
Go.
Tell the story.

Live as people who know that death has been defeated.
Live as people who trust that God is still bringing life out of the
places we thought were lost.

Because this is the truth of Easter morning:
The night does not last forever.
The stone does not stay in place.
The tomb does not hold.

Christ is risen.

And we—
even now—
are being raised with him.

Amen.