

Imagine you wake up in the morning, you reach for your phone, and there it is — a message. Short, simple, unbelievable:

“He is not here. He is risen.” A push notification, a viral post, a TikTok spreading across the world in seconds.

And immediately the reactions begin: “Fake news.” “Impossible.” “I have to share this right now!”

I think that’s how we imagine Easter begins, or at least how we wish it would. Maybe that’s how we would write the story ourselves—big, spectacular, undeniable. But Matthew tells it differently.

Matthew does not describe a loud, overwhelming moment in front of the powerful. Instead, he tells of a quiet beginning at the margins, in the half-light of early morning. There, the women are on their way—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. We, too, have gathered this morning in that same half-light.

The women go to the tomb not because they expect a miracle, but to say goodbye. They come with what is real: their grief, their confusion, their pain. They are not expecting a new beginning. They expect the stone, the tomb, and death. And right there, everything changes. The earth shakes, the stone is rolled away, and an angel speaks. The message that changes everything: “The one you are looking for is not here. He is risen.” There it is—the push notification, the TikTok, the message: He is not here. He is risen.

The angel appears to the women—not to the disciples, not to Peter, not to John, but to the women. Maybe because they stayed when others left. Maybe because they endured when it was painful. Maybe because they were able to love even without hope. Or maybe simply because they were there, because they showed up in the darkness without knowing what to expect.

We, too, came out of the night this morning. We might have received a blessing or a prayer. We listened to psalms of lament. And while we were here, it slowly became light.

Outside, the day is breaking, and here in this church, it has become brighter as well. With every person who entered, with every prayer we prayed, with every breath we took, it became a little lighter. Together, we are the body of Christ, and together, it becomes light.

The Easter story teaches us that those who walk in the dark and face their grief become open to what God is doing.

God does not choose the loudest or the most powerful, but entrusts the greatest message to those whose hearts are open. And so, those who came in mourning become the first witnesses of the resurrection, and those who were searching become the ones who proclaim the good news.

And while the women are still on their way, filled with both fear and great joy, overwhelmed of what happened; Jesus himself meets them.

Jesus meets them on the road, not after they have figured everything out, but right there, between fear and hope. And he says to them, “Do not be afraid.”

Then he gives them a direction: “Go and tell my disciples to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Galilee is a special place. It is not the place of great drama. It is not Jerusalem with its temple and its power. Galilee means ordinary life. There are simple homes. It smells like fish and dust. People go about their work. They laugh, argue, eat, and live. In Galilee, everything began. There Jesus called people, taught them, healed them, ate with them, and built community. It was there that the disciples first experienced that God is near.

And that is exactly where they are sent back.

They will not find him at the tomb. Not by holding on to what is past. But where life is happening. Where they belong. Where they have already once experienced that God is present in the middle of ordinary life.

That is the movement of Easter: away from the tomb and toward life, away from what seems finished and toward what is beginning anew.

So the question of Easter for us is both simple and deep: Where is our Galilee? Where in our everyday life can we begin again? Where can we learn to see again that God is present? Maybe it is the kitchen in the morning, a walk outside, a conversation, a prayer, the presence of a friend, a quiet moment. Maybe it is exactly the place we already know, but need to see with new eyes.

Easter means this: Jesus has already gone ahead of us. He is not waiting in the tomb, but in life. He is already there—in our everyday, in our ordinary today.

The women do not stand still. They go. With fear and great joy. They do not understand everything, but they move forward. And it is on that very road that Jesus meets them.

And so it is with us. We do not have to understand everything. We can simply go, step by step, into our own Galilee.

For the message still holds true today: He is not here. He has risen. He is risen, indeed.

Amen.