

(CHILDREN'S) SERMON TEXT FOR EASTER DAY A
PREACHED SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2017 AT ZION LUTHERAN, ENOLA PA
TEXT: Matthew 28.1-10

What are you afraid of?

Spiders, snakes, other animals

The dark

Roller coasters

Scary monsters

Thunderstorms, earthquakes

Cemeteries

Our bible reading today has a lot of people who were **afraid**. Let's check out this story again.

Read My Happy Easter Book.

When Jesus **died**, Matthew says that, "The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were **raised**. After his resurrection they came **out** of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many." That would have been a pretty **gruesome** sight!

So, two days after Jesus died, the two Marys come to the **tomb** where Jesus was, and they expected to find everything just as they had **left** it. And, the **guards** were still there. They had been put there because the Roman leaders were afraid that Jesus' disciples might try and **steal his body** and then **claim** that he had risen from the dead. So the guards were still there when the two women came to the tomb early that Sunday morning.

Suddenly the earth started to shake - an **earthquake!** - and an **angel** appeared like lightning. The **guards** were **quick** to react: they almost **fainted** ("became like dead men") from the shock of it all!

The angel told the two women not to be **afraid**. He said that **Jesus wasn't in the tomb. Jesus wasn't dead any more**. See, look for yourself in the tomb - it's **empty!** And he told the women to **go and tell the other disciples**.

So **off they go** as the angel had told them to do, and they don't get very **far** when suddenly, out of nowhere, **Jesus meets them!** They **recognized** him immediately, and fell on their knees and took hold of Jesus' feet. They couldn't believe that he was **alive!** **But he was**. And he told the women

not to be afraid, but to go and tell the other disciples, and he would see them later.

What a story! It's hard to **believe**, isn't it? You've got **earthquakes**, and people **almost dying** out of fear. You've got **tombs splitting open** and dead people **walking** around. You've got a visit from an **angel**, and then a visit from someone who **was dead** but was now **alive!** And there's a lot of **fear**. Now, this kind of stuff doesn't **happen** to us, does it? I hope not! It might happen in **movies**, but not in real life.

No, **this kind of stuff only happens when God shows up**. And God sure knows how to **shake things up**, doesn't he?

In the bible, earthquakes marked very important events, and they often signaled that a **God-event** had occurred or will occur. So we shouldn't be surprised that at **both** these important times – when Jesus **died** and when he was **resurrected** – an earthquake occurred.

Remember how I said that there were **guards** at Jesus' tomb so that no one could steal his body? Well, even with the guards, Jesus did not **remain in that tomb**, nor did he **remain dead**. No, that Sunday morning he was **alive** as he greeted the two Marys. Because, after all, **Jesus was God**, and **God can do whatever God decides to do**. And Jesus had told his disciples that he would be **raised** on the third day, that he would be with them **again**, and that he would be with them **always**.

The Roman ruler, named Pilate, told the guard, the chief priests and the Pharisees to make Jesus' tomb as **secure** as they could. And they did – they put guards in front of the tomb who were there 24/7. Now, those guards probably had one of the **easiest work assignments** in history - make sure that a dead man **stays** dead. They **failed** at their assignment, didn't they?

Because here's the thing: how do soldiers secure the world against a **miracle**? Answer: **They don't**. No human entity, government or otherwise, is a match for the power of God to raise his Son - and us - from death to life, from fear to joy, from bondage to freedom. That's what this Easter day is all about. God is not about to be limited by a tomb or a Roman soldier or any other human limitations that we try to place on God.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!