

Easter Sunday with John Chrysostom

April 12, 2020

Reflections from Pastor Katie

I love the Matthew 28 version of the Easter story, it's so dramatic. There is a song that tells Matthew's version of the Easter story that I recommend, it's by Donald Lawrence and the Tri-city Singers, and the song is called "Matthew 28." Look it up on YouTube or Spotify, it's so much fun.

But this story is so dramatic, it's early in the morning. There are two people named Mary who come to the tomb, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, we don't even know who the other Mary is.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven. His face was like lightning and his clothing was as white as snow, and for fear of him the soldiers shook and became like dead men. I don't know what it means to shake and become like a dead man at the same time, but that's how Matthew describes what happens.

Then the angel says to the women, "Fear not, for I know you seek Jesus who was crucified, he is not here. Come see the place where the Lord used to lay."

Come and see the empty tomb.

Then, the angel gives the women some instructions.

"Go to Galilee and tell the others, he has been risen from the dead."

In chapter 28, verse 8 it says the women left the tomb quickly with fear AND great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

I don't know about you, but during this pandemic time, I've been feeling a lot of fear. And I don't usually think about FEAR and GREAT JOY in the same situation. But the women leave the tomb with fear and great joy.

And so my word for us this morning is that we have the opportunity, even in a time of great fear to practice great joy.

One of my favorite verses, is from Nehemiah chapter 8, verse ten. It says, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah tells the people have a party, make some food, listen to some music because the JOY of the LORD is your strength.

Church, we can't have a party, we're in a stay at home order. But we can still find joy in the Lord, we can still celebrate, we can still connect with each other. This is a time when we need strength, so this is a time when we need joy.

So our two Marys are running to tell the disciples (with fear and great joy). Jesus meets them on the road and says, "greetings." The Greek word for "greetings," means both hello but also "rejoice." They

take hold of his feet and worship him. They grab his feet and worship him. What do we do with the joy of the resurrection this year?

One of my colleagues turned me on to the words of John Chrysostom (they called him the “Golden Mouthed One”) a 3rd century preacher and his Easter sermon. I believe that it is a word for us today. Imagine the legacy of saints between now April 2020, back thousands of years to the third century who have celebrated great Easter Joy, though easy times in History, and through difficult times in history. Hear the good news from John Chrysostom with me.

Easter Homily, John Chrysostom

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants?
Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary with fasting?
Let them now receive their wages!

If any have toiled from the first hour,
let them receive their due reward;
If any have come after the third hour,
let him with gratitude join in the Feast!
And he that arrived after the sixth hour,
let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss.
And if any delayed until the ninth hour,
let him not hesitate; but let him come too.
And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour,
let him not be afraid by reason of his delay.
For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.
He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour,
as well as to him that toiled from the first.

To this one He gives, and upon another He bestows.
He accepts the works as He greets the endeavor.
The deed He honors and the intention He commends.
Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike receive your reward;
rich and poor, rejoice together!
Sober and slothful, celebrate the day!
You that have kept the fast, and you that have not,
rejoice today for the Table is richly laden!

Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one.
Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith.
Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!

Let no one grieve at his poverty,
for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again;
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free.
He has destroyed it by enduring it.
He destroyed Hell when He descended into it.
He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh.

Isaiah foretold this when he said,
"You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below."
Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with.
It was in an uproar because it is mocked.
It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed.
It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated.
It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive.

Hell took a body, and discovered God.
It took earth, and encountered Heaven.
It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

O death, where is thy sting?
O Hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is Risen, and you, o death, are annihilated!
Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down!
Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is Risen, and life is liberated!

Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead;
for Christ having risen from the dead,
is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen!