

+++ In the Name of Jesus +++

Title: “Cross Training”

Date: Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There 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. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then 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.’

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

+++

The last time we met here for worship (2 days ago, on Good Friday morning), the whole story had come to a crashing halt.

- Jesus was dead.
- His body had been wrapped-up for burial and stowed away securely in a rock-cut tomb.
- A heavy stone had been put into place, to keep intruders out.
- A squad of soldiers had been stationed nearby, to make sure nothing was moved... nothing was disturbed... nothing happened.

And that was it! The story was over. “Move along, everyone. There’s nothing to see here.”

Jesus’ disciples had *gotten* that message. Nobody had to tell *them* it was all over. They dragged their butts back home (from the garden where Jesus had been arrested), they locked their doors, and they made sure they kept as low of a profile as possible—afraid that *they* were going to end up “nailed up on crosses” like their Master had been. Two of those disciples, looking back on everything that had happened, summed it all up by saying, “**We had hoped that he was going to be the one to redeem Israel.**” (Luke 24:21)

Absolutely, that *had* been their hope. They *had* been sure that Jesus was *going to turn out to be* the Christ (that is: the Anointed-One, the Messiah, the Saviour). These disciples had *no idea* that everything was going to end up *like this!* Maybe they weren’t totally sure *how* it was all supposed to end up, but they *certainly* never expected Jesus to die on a Roman cross and be buried in a borrowed grave. As far as they were concerned, the hope of Israel was now dead—*buried* there in that locked-down tomb. And that was the end of it. *Everything* in their spiritual life had come to a standstill.

The women Jesus had gathered around himself, over the course of his ministry, were a little more flexible... a little more mobile... a little more hopeful. They, at least, had the energy and initiative to get up early on Sunday morning and make their way out to the tomb, carrying spices to anoint the body of their Master. Even so, those women too struggled mightily with the hopelessness that many of us are familiar with in ourselves, from all those times we have made sad trips to the sickbed, hospital bed, nursing home, and graveside. Even though those women were *trying* to keep their spirits up—still, like the men, they also faced an overwhelming sense of loss and grief that gave

them, too, a draggy and dreadful sense that “it was all over.”

What you and I know, you see, is something that those disciples (both the men *and* the women) were only just barely starting to discover, that *first* Easter morning. The story *wasn't* over. In fact, it was only just beginning! Early that morning, right around the time the sun was rising—well, guess what? The Son was rising!

- And just like that: Those guards who had been stationed there *to make sure “nothing moved,”* fainted and fell aside in fear.
- An angel, bright as lightning, rolled back that heavy, solid, immovable stone—and *sat* on it (as if to keep it there).
- Then, that angel delivered this energizing and electrifying message to those women: **“Come and see! Then, go and tell!”** Or, more precisely: **“I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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!”** (Matt 28:6-7)

And just like that, everything started to change. Off those women ran, at full speed—**“hurrying away from the tomb”**—**“still afraid”** (to some extent, yes of course) **“but filled with joy.”** (Matt 28:8)

And then, as if that angel and empty tomb had not already given them enough of a jolt, they “just so happened” to bump into Jesus himself! This wasn't just a flashback, a fond memory, or a figment of their imagination. *No*, there Jesus was, alive and active, living and breathing, moving and speaking. Those women couldn't stop themselves from rushing up to him, falling down at his feet, and worshipping him. Jesus, though, on his side, had no time for any of that. He repeated the same instructions they had already received from the angel. **“Don't be afraid. Go and tell! Share this good news about what you've seen and heard, with the male disciples too. Get those guys off their butts, off their couches, and out the door, and moving, all the way up to Galilee.”** (Matt 28:10)

So (as we heard)—*yes!*—off those women ran! The story *wasn't* over—not quite yet, and for that matter, not really ever! There was no time for those women to waste—no lazing around, taking it easy, glumly ruminating over all the sad details of what had happened. Ever since the sun had risen (*and The Son had risen!*), all of Jesus's followers had been plunged into a high-energy program of “cross-training”!

- It started with those women—who *entered* that empty tomb, and *saw* the place where Jesus had been laying, and *hurried* away from the tomb, and *ran* to tell the disciples.
- Then—soon enough—those disciples, too, would find themselves *seeing* and *touching* their living Lord, then *hitting the road* back up north to Galilee, and *diving* into an intensive set of post-resurrection “discipleship workouts” with their living Lord.
- Then, a few weeks after that, when the Holy Spirit came to be poured out in an unprecedented way on the day of Pentecost, the whole Christian church found itself busier and more active than it had ever been, *carrying* that high-energy, power-packed, “self-propelled” news of Jesus' death and resurrection all the way out to “the ends of the earth.” (Finally, even “all the way *here*” to Vancouver Island!)

And now that you and I have heard this Easter message too—the story isn't over for us yet, either.

- Some of us may have come here today (more or less) *ready* for this. We're *wearing* our “exercise outfits” already (spiritually speaking), and we've *got* our “cross-trainers” on. We came here *expecting* to meet our risen Lord—and be touched, and changed, and transformed, and energized, *by* the power of his resurrection life.

- Others among us here this morning might *not* feel quite so ready (yet) to “jump in” and really get *working* on our faith, *stretching* our spiritual muscles, and *taking* our Christian life to the next level.

But: ready or not, this is what the Easter message *does*, for all of us! The power of the living Lord Jesus is packed into every single proclamation of the Gospel—this *great good news* that

The grave is empty!

Death is done!

The devil himself has been defeated!

Everyone who hears and receives this message, gets a new lease on life—life *now* and life forever! Both the angel at the tomb, and the risen Lord, gave the women the same command: **“Don’t be afraid! Come and see; go and tell.”** So, you and I too need to “hit the ground running,” because this great good news that has now been shared with us, is something the whole world needs to hear.

Jesus is alive!

And because he lives, we will live also.

Death is not the last word anymore, for any of us!

Our story too, like our Saviour’s, keeps on going, on the other side of the grave.

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,” St. Paul writes at the end of our second reading—**“For all these reasons, stand firm! Let nothing move you! Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”** (1 Cor 15:58)

On the one hand: Yes, you and I *should* be immovable—that is, in our faith itself. Don’t let anything or anyone *budge* you away from your confidence that Jesus has died and risen *for you*. Stand firm, and *don’t move* off of that foundation, ever!

On the other hand: It is *precisely* that “firm and solid foundation of faith” that has *always* been *moving* Christ’s people dynamically and energetically into action! There *is* still work to be done—here in our congregation and community, and out there in the wider church too, and all around the world.

So, get ready to run! There’s ground to be covered... training to take advantage of... and most of all, a story that needs to be told.

“Do not be afraid!” Instead, **“Come and see! Then go and tell!”**

Thanks be to God! Amen!