

Go Quickly and Tell His Disciples

Matthew 28:1-10

Richard C. Allen

April 20, 2014

South Glastonbury

Connecticut

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are the first witnesses to the Resurrection. They find the tomb empty and they are told by an angel that Christ has risen. Only in our imaginations can we feel what they must have been feeling. It is something beyond exhilaration! Then the angel tells them to “go quickly and tell the disciples.” **This is the work of one who is a witness**, to reveal what we have seen and heard and come to believe.

Through all the ages, Christians who experience the blessing of new life, who have a spiritual awakening, who discover the abundance of life, who come to believe in the power of prayer, who see clearly that life is eternal are compelled to bear witness to these truths. We can't sit silently on what we know. We are like the child in the toothpaste commercial who comes running out of the dentist's office proclaiming 'no cavities, no cavities.' Like those kids, we come running out of our darkness into the light proclaiming 'he is risen, he is risen!'

“Go quickly and tell his disciples.” The word that Jesus has risen from the dead spreads like a prairie fire. It spreads because the two women choose to be witnesses. They choose to pass on the Good News to Peter, to Andrew to James and John, to Phillip and Bartholomew, to Thomas and Matthew and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus and Simon the Cananaen. And we can picture how these disciples, in turn, became witnesses and shared the Good News with their families and acquaintances and even with strangers. We can see the geometric progression, the explosion of the numbers of those telling and hearing the Easter story. It spread like prairie fire.

On Easter Sunday we have a great miracle to celebrate. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: “Where, O Death, is thy sting?” We have a great miracle to celebrate: the assurance that life is eternal. AND...on Easter Sunday morning, we have a great responsibility to claim, a responsibility to be witnesses to the Resurrection, to the difference the Resurrection makes to us. For Christianity is always just one generation away from extinction! That thought keeps me up at night! It makes me want to be the most effective witness I can possibly be.

On many Easter mornings, I include in the bulletin that profound theological statement by Clarence Jordan: “The crowning evidence that he lives is not a vacant grave, but a spirit-filled fellowship; not a rolled-away stone, but a carried-away church.”

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary can testify to the rolled-away stone; but you and I can testify to a carried-away church!

A carried-away church is one that invites a sophomore to play in church a piece of music on the piano he has composed himself. Thank you, Anders Waldo, for playing your stunning melody three weeks ago.

A carried-away church is one that traipses around a golf course for five hours and raises \$5000 for the ABC House so inner city youth can have access to a life-changing education! Thank you golf team!

A carried-away church is one whose Tuesday Morning Bible class needs to split into two groups because it’s bursting at the seams! Thank you, men and women, for being so hungry to wrestle with Scripture!

A carried-away church is one whose Pre-School already has a waiting list for next fall because local families know their children will blossom in that setting of loving nurture at High Street School! Thank you Pre-School ministry team!

A carried-away church is one whose members pray without ceasing, pouring out to God all the matters of the heart. Thank you prayer shawl knitters; thank you prayer vigil participants; thank you everyone who ever writes into the book of joys and concerns; thank you church school teachers for opening the language of prayer to children and youth.

A carried-away church is one that ends the calendar year \$35,000 to the good and uses that income to assure that our buildings and grounds are safe and lovely and inviting and reflective of God's creative spirit. Thank you pledgers and tithers and givers of all kinds!

I am asking us to be a witnessing church. **For we have come to believe as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to believe.** We have a story to tell. It is a life-giving story, a life-affirming story. For in our midst, people with addictions find sobriety; people in isolation find community; people devalued by the culture find validation; people with real despair find hope; and people who grieve find consolation that is real.

I've never been called to a courtroom to offer testimony to a judge and jury. But I like those moments in the TV dramas where the witness is asked to state the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. I like the idea of being a Christian witness, one who knows a truth and is not afraid to bare witness to that truth.

There are many things I do not know; it's a long list. Just ask my children!! What I do know is this: Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal the love of God, to invite the world to enjoy a deep soak in that love, and to call us to be the disciples who share this news in word and deed. In the greatest of hope, I say, 'Go and tell the others: Christ is risen! Risen indeed! Amen!