

Matthew 28: 1-10

Easter is that **magical** time of year, when bunny rabbits lay eggs that taste like chocolate and hide them in homes for our children or grandchildren to find, and *joy* is in the air.

Easter usually coincides with that **magical** time of year when sap runs in the maple trees, when barren branches burst forth into bud or flower, when crocuses bravely bloom through the retreating winter snow, and the *joy* of new life resonates in our soul.

Easter is that **magical** time of the year when churches swell with worshippers and music soars, as we share the *joy* of Resurrection. Are we feeling the *Joy*?

The Easter story in **Matthew's** gospel certainly begins with the **magical** but not the *joy*.

In **Matthew's** gospel, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go at sunrise to the tomb, on the first day of the week.

Magically, there is a great earthquake because **magically** an angel of the Lord flashing and shining like lightning has come down from heaven.

Magically the huge stone is dislodged from the entrance to **Jesus'** tomb.

Magically, no one is injured and just as **magically**, the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb fall down in a paralyzing stupor of utter terror.

Magically or maybe not so **magically** the women look on, unfazed.

Magically the angel tells the two Marys not to be afraid and to actually come closer and see that **Jesus** is not there, but has been raised.

The angel **magically** tells them to go quickly and tell the disciples,

“He has been raised from the dead. He is going to Galilee ahead of you;

There, you will see him.”

Then the **mystical** takes hold as the two Marys run from the tomb but are immediately interrupted.

Mystically, they bump into the **Risen Christ** who greets them cheerily.

The women fall down and grab-hold of him in unbelievable **joy**. In this **mystical** moment, the two Marys want to hold on to the Risen One; hold on to the **joy**.

But **Jesus** tells them, “**Go**” because as *we know mystical* moments are fleeting and so must be shared with others for their **joy** to continue in our lives. **Jesus** tells them “**go**” to those men with whom they must surely be angry. “**Go**” to those men who abandoned **Jesus** only days before:

Who denied knowing **Jesus**.

Who fled in his time of greatest need and who are now in hiding.

Jesus tenderly reiterates what the angel had already told the two Marys, now with an unexpected intimacy, “**Tell my *brothers*, I’ll meet them in Galilee, there they will see me.**”

This is an amazing **joyful, mystical** moment, interrupting the run towards the **practical**. This is an amazing **joyful, mystical** moment, with its signature intimacy and inclusiveness.

This is the amazing **mystical** moment that brings to the Disciples the **joy** of still being brothers.

The **Risen Jesus** doesn’t appear **magically**, like the angel flashing and shining like a destructive lightning strike.

The **Risen Jesus** doesn’t appear **magically**, like some super-hero high in the air, triumphant over the temple to signify to everyone his spiritual victory.

The **Risen Jesus** doesn’t appear in stern judgment upon his fearful friends who fled.

No. He appears **mystically** to two women, the two Marys. **Jesus** shares a simple heart-to-heart encounter that engenders **joy**.

Jesus appears with the gentle **allowing love** of his **Passion**.

Jesus knows that we are more precious than our worst failings can undo.
Jesus' allowing love, allows for our failings.

In fact, **Jesus** refuses to define us by these failings and this Resurrection appearance tells us so.

We feel it don't we? *We know the joy* when *allowing love, allows love* to be the final outcome.

Mary and Mary now know, and they go from a **mystical** moment with **Jesus** to this larger community, this hurting, hiding community with all its needs, fears and dashed expectations. They go with the *joy* of **Jesus' allowing love**.

They tell the disciples that unbelievably, lovingly, **Jesus** has called them his '*brothers*'. Again, there is something so *deeply respectful* in this story of Resurrection. **Jesus** forgives and identifies as his family, those who have denied him, who have rejected him, who have fled from him. He shares the *allowing love* of his **passion** which transcends crucifixion and becomes resurrection *joy* in their lives.

And he still does this today.

Allowing love, we know the power of it. We don't always experience it or expect it every day. But *we certainly know* the *joy* when we receive it:

That *allowing love* that forgives us before being asked to.

That *allowing love* that accepts us as who we are, no matter what.

That *allowing love* that just resonates in our souls and says,

"You are a beloved child of God." *Joy, joy* and more *joy!*

Like the disciples, we all need the **mystical** moment of forgiveness and acceptance. We all need the gift of *allowing love*. And like the disciples, it comes to us in a **practical** way. It comes to us through the inspired lives of others.

So, Easter doesn't come through **magical** events and the faith doesn't grow by **magical** means. Rather, the Disciples and the women with them lived and taught the real resurrection, sharing the *joy* of *allowing love!*

Application for Today

We experience resurrection *joy* when the **mystical** moments of **Easter appearances** become grounded in the **practical** activities of our lives. When the *joy of allowing love, allows love* to be the final outcome.

Sending Forth: Matthew 28: 16-20

So it is back to Galilee, back to the Galilee of their lives and our lives; back to where it first began. There the disciples and all the followers experience **mystically** the **Risen Christ**. They experience him together on a mountainside, *joy* filling their hearts as his teachings once warmed them on that same mountain.

And still the *joyful* encounter is filled with a **practical** imperative. “**Go and tell the disciples**” becomes “**Go and make disciples**”.

The **mystical** moment that is so fleeting directs them to bring this *joy* to the **practical** world of every day. It challenges them to *expand their perspective* to include all and everyone.

It also directs us to be here today.

We make disciples when we also *expand our perspective*; when the *joy of our allowing love, allows love* to be the final outcome.

Let's sing our Recessional hymn #420 “Go to the World”