

Grace and peace to you from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! He is risen!  
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Morning has broken and  
today we shout alleluia!!

We've been journeying toward this day all of Lent,  
we're celebrating Resurrection;  
we're celebrating that Jesus died but lives again;  
We' celebrating God defeating sin, evil and death and setting us free.

Our Resurrection story in Matthew starts with the  
women going to the tomb.  
Two things stand out for me:  
the angel and the earthquake.

First, the Angel.

The angel gets more play in Matthew than the other gospels.  
And, we often only notice the words of the angel.  
But this angel who causes an earthquake gets three verses  
before even saying a thing!

“And suddenly there was a great earthquake,  
for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven,  
came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

**3** His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.

**4** For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.”

I mean, this angel is terrifying.

Matthew gives a lot of attention to this heavenly messenger.  
I also love how nonchalantly the angel is just sitting on a rock,  
enjoying the morning,  
while people literally quake in his presence.  
Awesome.

And then the angel speaks and says, "Do not be afraid,"  
as angels often say.

And we get these four words twice,  
from the angel and then from Jesus.  
These four words, simple as they are,  
are a twofold promise responding to  
two disruptive and terrifying earthquakes.

For this is not the first earthquake this Holy Week.  
There was one at the moment of Jesus' death, too.  
At his death, the world was rocked.  
All was unstable.  
And, now, as the resurrection is soon to be discovered,  
the world is rocked again.  
It's one continuous event, really  
And gives us a truth: new life is literally earth-shattering.

And Jesus' new life brings change.  
Most new things bring change.  
Many of us are resistant to change,  
so we sometimes need to be literally shaken and  
majorly disrupted in order to be open to something new.

Because change is scary.  
New life can be scary.  
Stepping into the unknown can be scary.  
But whatever we encounter,  
God is with us,  
and has got this under control.  
"Do not be afraid" is a promise to us in the midst of our fear.  
In those times, even and especially in those times,  
we are held in God's hand.

The resurrection is a unique event because  
God appeared in human history bringing

a whole new dimension to life.

Frederick Buechner described it in this way:

“...God keeps reentering the world,  
keeps offering himself to the world--by grace,  
keeps somehow blessing the world,  
making possible a kind of life which we all,  
in our deepest being, hunger for.

In Jesus God died and was raised,  
The New Testament gives witness not to resuscitation or  
a return to the life of this world,  
but to a changed Jesus, something new.  
And it announces the good news that this world was, is,  
and will be blessed and perfected,  
beyond our wildest hopes, our grandest visions,  
by the love of God made present in Jesus.

That Easter morning, Jesus blocked the path of  
the women as they ran from the tomb.  
The good News is that Jesus meets you in every earthquake zone,  
where the earth shakes, and the world convulses.  
Jesus meets you on the path when you run.  
Jesus meets you when you are shaking with fear.  
Jesus meets you when the ground moves under you and  
your life is changed forever.  
In the rubble and aftermath, he meets you as you  
search for meaning, for some way  
to put the pieces back together,  
to survive and live fully into your wisdom.

Resurrection Jesus comes to you when  
the tunnel of grief or hope for a cure is long and dark and  
suddenly your future is shadowed with uncertainty and fear.

The risen Christ is there for us to hold on to in the darkest, most shattered moments of life.

As we pick our way through the rubble of unemployment and lack of health care, Jesus meets us there.

As we seek to restore life-giving relationships, a balanced life, Jesus meets us there.

As we seek healing for chronic illness or a recent diagnosis, Jesus meets us there.

The risen Christ is there for us to hold on to when the earth rolls and tosses us about.

And, yes, Jesus is there when the rest of the world is celebrating and singing Alleluia and you can't get past the death and darkness of Good Friday for a year, maybe two, or maybe five when it's a major quake that has rocked your world.

Standing at the tomb,  
behold the One who has the power to bring us through whatever earthquake breaks the peace of life,  
to repair our shattered lives and  
to bring us through death itself into new life.

Jesus has died, but he is not in the tomb.  
He meets you here today,  
in bread and wine, in word and sacrament,  
in the faces of all who are gathered here today—  
Christ's own living body.

Christ is risen! Alleluia.  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!  
Amen.