

The women had spices and perfumes that they had purchased. They expected to find the body of Jesus. When they got to the tomb they were surprised because the stone had been rolled away. An angel appeared and told them that Jesus had risen. "Go tell the disciples and Peter!" And they ran! Not so much because they were so eager to tell the disciples what the angel had told them, but because they were terrified. Mark says, "**Trembling and astonishment had seized them.**" That is a vivid way of saying that their whole body was affected. They shivered. Their spine tingled. Finally, our reading says, "**They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid!**"

That sounds odd. Christians are taught that we are to evangelize, to tell others about Jesus. Here are the first people who have the Gospel, the good news, and they tell nothing to anyone. What is going on?

The main thing I'd like you to consider about this strange reaction is that for these women, this was not a story about somebody far off doing this, that, and the other. Sometimes Bible stories can seem like that. We hear about people we don't care about, doing things that seem to have very little to do with our lives. No spines will tingle with stories like that.

But people will tend to have strong reactions to stories—good or bad—that have to do with them. The announcement, "You're pregnant!" immediately changes the lives of the happy mom and dad. Immediately they are filled with wonder and anticipation. "What will happen and when?" Or, to change gears to the opposite side of the spectrum: the doctor says, "It's cancer." The future is also wondered about but with very different feelings. "What will happen and when?"

Jesus was these women's friend. They loved him. That is why they went to the tomb to honor him. But they thought that Jesus was in the past. They had seen him crucified. They had seen the unmistakable pallor of death. They were beginning to move on with their lives in a way that they could at least process, even if they weren't happy about it. We all learn what it is to be disappointed, needing to come to terms with that, and getting ready to start a new chapter in our lives.

This was upended by what the angels told them. "What will happen now?" "When will strange new things happen to me?" Those are the thoughts that seized the women and provoked such strong reactions in them.

It seems to me that in order for us to take Jesus's resurrection seriously, we must do the same. To be sure, it is possible to listen to the stories about Jesus as something foreign and detached. I've listened to reports of Jesus's resurrection that way. It isn't very interesting. What makes it interesting is to think about what it means personally. "What will happen and when?"

First of all, something that is applicable immediately is that God's attitude towards sinners like you is changed. Your sins are forgiven. This was a key component of the message that Jesus sent out his apostles to preach: "**Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**" Stop believing that you will be blessed by your sins, and believe that you will be blessed by Jesus instead. If you keep believing that you will be blessed by your sins, you will end up in the grave and in hell, but if you believe that you will be blessed by Jesus, then you will be resurrected to a new life.

This brings us to what will happen in the future. One day—and none of us really knows when—we are going to die. None of us knows what that will be like because no one has been able to tell us. But when that time comes, Jesus, our good shepherd, will be with us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Then we will meet God, our Creator and Judge. Again, what will that be like?

Finally, we and our lives will be completely transformed. We think babies can transform lives—and in so many ways they can—but that is nothing compared to the transformation of the new heavens, the new earth, the resurrected bodies, the healed minds and souls, the existence that is saturated in love because God is love. “What will that be like, and when will it happen?”

Everything changed for the women. Everything has changed for you. Jesus is not just a story. Easter is only a far-off thing for those who want it to be that way. For them, they might be curious, they might not be. They do not take it personally. These women took it personally. So what will it be for you? Will the resurrection remain a distant tale, or will it seize you as it did these women? They trembled because the future they thought they might have had been shattered by grace.

You, too, stand at this threshold. “**He is not here—He is risen!**” “What will happen now, and when?”