

He Lives!

Matthew 28:1-10

Let me tell you what happened! It will be hard for you to believe, but HE LIVES! Jesus, the unique son of God lives!

O, I know I am just a woman, and you don't think I know what I am talking about, but He Lives!

O, I am being rude, my name is Mary. My name means "wished-for child." I'm the mother of James and Joses, some of his friends know him as Joseph. I am the wife of Cleopas, a disciple of Jesus, as we speak he is on his way to our home in Emmaus...he doesn't believe me either, but I know what I saw and heard!

Mary Magdalene and I got up at the beginning of the day to go and minister to the body of Jesus. You ask why we went, after all he died on Friday. There was nothing so precious for the body of our teacher. Joseph of Arimathea brought fine linen and Nicodemus helped with the arrangements and brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes, used to perfume and wrap Jesus' body on Friday and laid him in Joseph's own tomb. We women who had supported Jesus in his ministry, prepared the spices and fragrant oils, not used on Friday, to place on his body as soon as the Sabbath was over. We took charge of Jesus' burial out of love for him. We were expressing our grief, devotion, respect, adoration, and desire to protect the Lord's body from His enemies. We did what we could according to our desire and financial resources, and in keeping with the laws, customs, and traditions of our people.

We had been with him throughout his ministry, whenever we could. We saw his miracles, we believed his teachings. He was a rabbi that never looked down on us or belittled us or made us feel that we were less than because we were women. He explained that we were also made in the image of God, and there was nothing defective about us because we were women. We saw him heal the sick, cleanse lepers, give sight to the blind, give life to those who had died. On one occasion he said “I am the resurrection and the life” when he brought Mary and Martha of Bethany’s brother back to life! We attended the party where they celebrated that miracle...everyone was there!

But...back to what I was telling you about the wonderful thing that happened this morning. Mary Magdalene and I went to the tomb while it was still dark, just before dawn. Yesterday was the Sabbath, when by law and custom we were not able to return to tomb to complete our work. As we were discussing how we might ask the guards if they would help us roll the stone away from the tomb, there was a great earthquake and lightening, but no rain. It was frightening with earth and stones moving from their places. I was grateful that we were outside, because it felt like the earth would swallow us alive. We barely kept our footing. When everything settled, Mary and I joked that maybe we would not need the guards help after all! When we reached the guards they were afraid also. They said they had seen an angel, that they had shaken with fear and some of them had fainted and appears like dead men. None of them would own up to it being him! When we finally arrived at the tomb we saw the angel too! He had rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow, it was almost too much to behold and we looked away. But the angel said to us, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are

looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. We looked and where we had laid his body on Friday, was an empty space with only his grave clothes. Then the angel told us to go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So we left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. But before we could leave the garden, suddenly Jesus met us and said, "Greetings!" "Rejoice!" And we went to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to us, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Since that time we have told the 11 apostles, and the other disciples who have waited in Jerusalem until today to travel back to their homes and their day to day lives. They were so disappointed that things had not gone as we had hoped and believed, but I have seen the risen Lord. I know he lives.

Believe me, this is the most remarkable and amazing news the world will ever hear. It means there is a God. It means that Jesus is God's Son. It means that Christ is alive – today – and we can know Him and be touched by His life and power. It means that we need not fear death the way we once did, we are not destined to oblivion but to spend eternity with God. It also means that knowing God is of the utmost importance right now, while we can.

I know it's hard to believe, but some things I know, because I had the same questions:

First, was Jesus really dead? Jesus was publicly executed before a large crowd, and I was there. He was certified as dead by both a centurion in charge of the execution – a professional whose job it was to determine that

death had taken place – and by the regional governor, Pilate, who sent to have the matter checked. Some said this morning that he must not have been really dead, that He was only near death but revived in the cool of the tomb. I helped to anoint his body for burial. He was dead.

Second, the tomb was found empty. Jesus was buried in a new tomb, one that had never before been used, we did not make an mistake in locating it! When we arrived on the second morning after His death, His body was gone. The empty tomb was no less astonishing to the guards than to us. We know His enemies had been working for years to see Him dead and buried. Having accomplished their goal, they took pains to post a guard and seal the tomb with an enormous boulder. But this morning the tomb was found empty.

Who emptied it? Either men or God. So far His enemies have not produced his body to refute our claims that He is alive! We know none of us took the His body...and I know that I saw him alive.

I have already experienced a change in my life. He has given me hope, joy, peace, salvation, and mercy. I invite you to believe and receive the fruit of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

HE LIVES!

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