# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“He is Risen From the Dead”**

**Matthew 28:1-10**

 **April 9, 2023**

When our children were young we lived about an hour’s drive from my parents. Our boys loved going to Grammy’s house where she would feed them homemade cookies and papa would tell stories. Then, when our sons were 13, 11 and 8 respectively, my mother died suddenly and unexpectedly. It was the first death they had experienced up close and personal, and all that was left to do in this world was to visit her grave in the cemetery and quietly remember the good times from when she was alive.

But, thank God that quiet remembering at the graves of our loved ones will only be for a little while longer. Because of what happened in one amazing moment in history some 2,000 years ago, in a small cemetery outside the walls of Jerusalem, we can be reunited with them in a new life. It was early on a Sunday morning. Some women had left their humble homes to walk together to visit the grave of their beloved friend, the late Jesus of Nazareth. I invite you to join me as I read Matthew 28:1-10

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.” The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

As these women went to the tomb, what were they expecting to find? Nothing but death, decay, sorrow, and pain. It’s all that any of us can expect in the face of death, and there is nothing that you or I can do to change that. Nothing we can do to bring them back for just one more hug, one more smile, one more kiss on the cheek and the words, “I love you.” What the women found, however, was an empty tomb.

Jesus had been raised from the dead, as these women and many others after them gave witness to, and all who by faith trust in him will be raised as well. “I go to prepare a place for you,” Jesus told his friends, “and I will come back to take you to that place so that you will always be with me where I am.” This world is not all there is. This life which inevitably ends in death is not all that is real. You and I are invited to believe in Jesus Christ, including belief in his resurrection, and thereby join in that resurrection.

Then, as the women left the empty tomb behind, they met Jesus. This morning, that same Jesus meets you by his Holy Spirit. He meets you in your doubt, in your loneliness, in your fear, not merely as a figure in history, but as the one who invites you to believe in him today as your risen Savior.

And, Jesus greeted them. The Greek word in the text is the word for a casual, everyday greeting, such as “Hello,” or “Good morning,” or “How are you?” Notice that Jesus didn’t stand back and evaluate whether the women were good enough or spiritual enough or had enough understanding of the Christian faith to be met by him. Rather, it was a simple, “It’s good to see you.”

Should you doubt whether you are worthy of God’s love and grace today, remember how he referred to his disciples, that group of men who had denied him, deserted him, and who were even then hiding in a room behind locked doors. “My brothers,” he called them.

This is how Jesus comes to you and to me today. He invites us to become a part of his family, to be his brothers and sisters, with God as our heavenly Father. The apostle Paul puts it this way in Romans chapter 10: “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Jesus is pleased to meet you today. Are you pleased to meet him?