The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." (Matthew 28:5-6)

God of new life, you bring life out of death and light into darkness. We praise your name and glorify you for the resurrection of your Son, Jesus. We thank you for the hope you give us, that this life isn't all there is and that one day we will worship you in all your glory. Continue to strengthen our faith that we would share the good news of new life in Christ with all whom we meet. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

The women came to Jesus' tomb on the Sunday morning after he died, bringing spices to anoint his body. Suddenly there was an earthquake, and an angel came and rolled the stone away from the tomb. As the guards fell in terror, the angel told the women that Jesus had risen from the dead!

Read: Matthew 28:1-15

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

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The Biblical Context

Each of the Gospel writers tells the story of Jesus' resurrection from a different angle, focusing on the message of the empty tomb and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. Matthew's account of Easter morning is the only Gospel that describes the actual rolling away of the stone by the angel, and the effect it had on the soldiers who stood guard. At the sight of the angel, they collapsed in fear. Sadly, even after witnessing this great miracle, the guards were willing to lie about what they saw and deny the miracle of the resurrection.

Among those who believed, the living Jesus appeared to many of his followers over a period of 40 days before he ascended into heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. Mary and Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb "after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week." What do we call this day of the week? If the day Jesus died was the first day, what number was this day?

2. What happened when the women arrived at Jesus' burial site? How did they move the stone away from the entrance to tomb?

3. Describe the angel. How was he dressed? What did he look like? How did the guards respond to the sight of him?

4. How did the angel greet the women? How did they react to him?

5. What task did the angel tell the women to do? What promise did the angel give?

6. About how much time passed before the women saw Jesus? What things did Jesus say that were the same as what the angel had said?

7. What emotions do you imagine the guards were feeling after all this took place? What did the chief priests tell them to do?

8. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11. Here, the Apostle Paul recounts what happened after Jesus' death. Was it only the women that Jesus appeared to? Who else saw the risen Jesus? Why did Paul think it was so important to let us know this (v. 11)?

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