

"Good News Is Alive in the World" — Rev. Adam Hange

Matthew 28:1-10 | April 5, 2026

We've been on a journey together.

For the past several weeks, we've been following Jesus through some of his most beloved stories — a wedding saved from disaster, children welcomed into the center of things, the vulnerable defended, the powerful surprised.

Week after week, we've been asking the same question underneath all the others:

Where is the Kin-dom of God breaking through?

Where is the good news, and what does it look like when it arrives?

This morning, we arrive at the end of the story. Or — as it turns out — the beginning.

In contrast to some other gospels, Matthew's account of Easter morning is not quiet. It is not subtle.

There is a great earthquake. An angel descends from heaven in dazzling light. Roman soldiers — trained, armed, professional “peace-keepers” — shake and fall to the ground like dead men.

And two women, who had come to attend to the body of their teacher and friend, find themselves suddenly, unexpectedly, in the middle of the most astonishing moment in human history.

They didn't come looking for good news. They came to mourn. And that, I think, is exactly Matthew's point.

The Good News ***found them.***

Now — I want to say something that I think is important for a community like ours, made up of people who have traveled so many different roads to get here.

We don't have to have all of this figured out this morning.

Some of us believe in the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus, and *that faith* is a great treasure. Some of us hold the resurrection more as a profound mystery — a story **so true it transcends** the question of what physically happened in that garden so long ago.

Some of us are probably somewhere in between, and honestly, that's most of us on most days. That's OK!

What Matthew asks of us this morning is not a signed statement of belief. He asks us only to *pay attention*. That we *notice* what happens when the stone gets rolled away.

Here's what I want you to notice about this story: **Empire tried to prevent it.**

You see, Matthew is the only gospel writer who tells us that the chief priests went to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and asked him to seal the tomb.

They were worried. "*That deceiver,*" they called Jesus, "said he would rise again."

So they posted guards by the grave. They put a seal on the stone - to indicate if anyone broke it, and entered the tomb.

They did everything in their power to control the narrative and make absolutely sure the story ended the way they wanted it to end.

When that didn't work — when the guards came back shaken and empty-handed - the religious authorities paid them hush money.

"Say the disciples stole the body. We'll handle the governor."

And, in fact, many people believed *that* story for a long time...

Friends, we know something about this...

We live in a world where information is shaped, curated, and suppressed. Where algorithms decide what we see. ***Where bad news travels fast and good news struggles to find oxygen.***

Where the powerful work very hard to keep certain stories from being told.

But here is the Easter scandal: *Try as you might, you cannot seal this tomb.*

The good news got out! And it got out, because two ordinary women — not priests, not soldiers, not officials — ***showed up while it was still dark***, and witnessed something they could not keep to themselves.

They left, Matthew says, with *fear and great joy*, running to tell the others.

Fear and great joy, at the same time. *That sounds about right to me!*

The risen Christ meets them, and tells them:

“Do not be afraid. Go to Galilee. Tell them to meet me there.”

Galilee....

We began our whole Lenten journey in Galilee — at a wedding, of all places, where the wine ran out and Jesus quietly, almost secretly, made things right again.

And now, at the end of everything, Jesus sends them back there..

Not to Jerusalem. Not to the centers of power. But back to the *ordinary* places.

Back to their neighborhoods. Back to the people who were their family and friends and neighbors...

They were the first preachers of “the gospel!”

The scholar Amy-Jill Levine reminds us that the Greek word *eu-angelion* — "good news," "gospel" — was actually a *political term* in Jesus' day.

"Good news" was a word that belonged in a headline! It was what the Emperor announced: usually for a military victory, a tax holiday... or when declaring the Pax Romana - or "peace of Rome" - had reached your city...

(sarcastically) - "Good news!" *You've been conquered and you're part of the Roman Empire now! Yay!...*

That's how that word was used in its own time. But then, Jesus' followers took that word, and turned it inside out. Reclaiming it in the way other words have been *reclaimed* in our time.

"Our good news," they said, "doesn't come from Caesar. It comes from somewhere else entirely. From messengers of heaven. It's for everyone — especially the people the powerful ... have forgotten."

Friends, that's *still* what we're doing. That's *still* who we are. As followers of the Way.... bearers of good news!

Now — If it's OK, allow me to revisit what happened here this morning, just a little while ago.

We baptized a little boy. He is one year old, and he is the great-grandchild of Marj and George Gilmour, two beloved members of this congregation whom we buried not so long ago. Some of you knew them well. Some of you may be sitting with that even now — the grief still present, the missing them still real, even on a morning like this.

And yet — there he was. Right here. In this room.

I don't know a better definition of resurrection than that. We didn't have to argue about it or explain it. We just had to show up and pay attention.

Their life and legacy continue — in him, in us, in this community that loved them and buried them and kept going, and today welcomed his new life with water and with promises.

The “communion of saints” is not just a phrase we say. It is what we mean when we claim that love is stronger than death.

That is resurrection. New life, *their* life, continuing — right here, while we watched.

In a little while, we'll gather at this table and share bread and cup together — people from every background you can imagine, every chapter of faith, with every doubt and every hope — and we will remember that Jesus ate with everyone. That his table was never closed. And it never will be. That, too, is resurrection. Holy Communion, born anew, right in front of us.

And then we will send boisterous children out to find hidden eggs — which might be the most resurrection thing we do all day. Because that is exactly what Easter is: a treasure hidden in plain sight, and the pure delight of discovering it.

The theologian and pastor Lizzie McManus-Dail wrote something that has stayed with me. She said that **God is "more alive than anything that tries to kill God — more alive than anything that tries to kill the imago dei in all of us."**

Kings come and kings go. Mighty Powers rise and fall. But there is something that will not be buried. There is a goodness loose in the world that no stone can hold.

I see it in communities like this one — growing, intergenerational, beautifully diverse — made of people who know their neighbors and who haven't given up on our world.

I see it in the people who show up in the dark, the way those women showed up, not sure what they'll find, but showing up anyway.

I see it in the bread broken, the water poured, the children laughing, the egg hidden under a bush.

I see it in the legacy of hope and faith passed down from one generation to another. It's alive in this room, right now.

That is the good news.

It was alive before we got here.

And it will be alive *still* - long after we're gone.

This Easter morning, wherever you are in your journey — wherever you are in your questions — I want to leave you with the same charge the angel left with the women at the tomb:

Do not be afraid.

The good news is greater than any tyrant. It's more alive than anything that tries to kill it.

And all it needs is people willing to go — sometimes, in that place between fear and great joy — and share it with a world that is desperate to hear *good* news.

As we go, let us also go out seeking the “image of God” in the faces of neighbors and strangers, and in *all the good works* that are alive in our world today.

Go to Galilee... Go to your neighborhoods. Go to your dinner tables, your schools, and the places where ordinary life is happening.

For the risen Christ is already there, waiting for you...

*Happy Easter! Alleluia and **amen!***