

Earthquakes aren't necessarily a comforting image on the West Coast. However, this is how the Gospel of Matthew portrays the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a seismic event. An earthquake with an angel that makes the guards pass out in fear. And the angel's message to the women gathered at Jesus' tomb: "Do not be afraid." In face of a terrifying event, the angel calms the fear of the Marys. This is a good starting point for us this Easter Sunday as well – God's desire to calm our fears. In the face of so many things that make us afraid, the angel says "Do not be afraid."

Consider the arc of Palm-Passion Friday and Holy Week narratives. We met Jesus at the triumphal entry when we shouted "Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" And how that quickly changed to shouts of "Crucify him!" As some of you have noted through these dramatic and longer gospel readings, the words ring especially true when we hear about war in Iran and Middle East, when we hear about crackdowns on migrants in Canada, the US, and beyond. How the sentiment has shifted rather quickly from multiculturalism as our strength to anti-DEI sentiments closer to home. How a beloved children's author is making it her life's mission to make life miserable for trans kids and adults. The examples are close at hand in our daily lives.

The Holy Week stories also offer us an analysis of power. Structures in which we also participate and many of us benefit from. For example Pontius Pilate doesn't seem to dislike Jesus, so much as he doesn't want his privilege and power to be threatened. Pilate and Rome bear the blame for Jesus' death, rather than too often Christians have scapegoated Jesus' death on Jewish people. We recall that Jesus is Jewish. And we remember Jewish neighbours who are recipients of increased anti-Semitic attacks. So too the Islamophobia and erasure of violence against Palestinians in Gaza, including Christians there as well.

And yet today, the Easter gospel reminds us that Jesus' death is an earthquake, disrupting injustice in a suffering world. An earthquake that reminds us that autocratic rulers are not invincible, no matter how often they post on social media. The Easter gospel shakes the hubris opening the way for a new dawn to arise. Consider the instructions the angel shares with the Marys: "Come and see! Then go and tell!" Come and see that Jesus is risen. Then go and tell the other disciples. Fairly simple instructions. The kind of simplicity that is needed during a crisis. We too during a time of crisis need to simple instructions. We need to be reminded that Jesus is present with us today this Easter Sunday. To remember that with God all things are possible. Death cannot contain Jesus. He is risen. This new reality collides with the seeming inevitability of injustice and violence. God's plan deviates from power structures. Instead violence and death give way to resurrection and life.

Consider creation. Around Victoria for weeks we've been seeing the blossoms on cherry trees. Spring flowers are everywhere. So much is in bloom. A reminder reminder that creation is not beholden to human whims and desires. Creation continues to sprout new life. And we see new life and hope abound around us. With the gift of new friends at church, school, work, in our neighbourhoods. Meals and feasts continue. Today we gather around the table to receive the body and blood of Christ – new life of a risen Christ.

Today we also gather around to celebrate the baptisms of Clara and Elise. We share in their joy and imagination as children. We share in the joy of new life and hope as they fully become children of God – born into the unconditional love of Jesus. And we too enter a second naïveté, transformed by Jesus' presence, shaking our cynicism.

Through faith the Spirit gives us courage to believe that rebirth and new life are possible. The same God who transitioned from death to life. Whose wound and incisions are celebrated and point to the sacredness of the body. Jesus undergoes transition on the cross and his body is not deemed unworthy, but rather blessed. So too we undergo transition through baptism, passing from death to life.

Today I leave you with the final encounter of the disciples with Jesus. He repeats the words of the angel to the Marys. "Do not be afraid." Jesus presence disrupts fear. Being there new realities become possible. Although if my friend just died and was resurrected, I might be taken aback if the only thing he says is "Greetings!" You could fill in a few gaps in the narrative, Jesus. Perhaps the women could fill in the rest. Seeing Jesus was all they needed to know that what he prophesied had taken place. Jesus also repeats the words of the angel, "Go! And tell!" And that's what the women do. And that is Jesus' charge to us. "Go! And tell! The good news that the world is greater than our doom scrolling and our lack of faith that a better world is possible. Go and tell the good news of the Saviour of the world. There is enough love for everyone. Alleuia. Amen.