

# Matthew's Marys: Thoughts on the Resurrection

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<http://spaciousfaith.wordpress.com/2014/04/5633767190.jpg> [This post is adapted from a sermon on Matthew 28:1-10]

A rather interesting discussion emerged on my Facebook page this week about Easter sermons. Many were lamenting how difficult they are; a couple were suggesting that there is no need to even preach on Easter—that the story speaks for itself. And then my college chaplain wrote: “Every year at Easter I felt like the fellow in Garrison Keillor’s ‘News...’ who went to the lectern to read the Christmas story one Christmas Eve service, looked down at the text, looked back up at the congregation, and said, ‘Stop me if you’ve heard this one!’”

Right? We’ve all heard this one. We all know the Easter story. Which, actually, is four stories. Each Gospel tells of Jesus’ resurrection with its own distinct slant and unique details. In all four Gospels the story happens on Sunday, Mary Magdalene is there, and the tomb is empty.

Beyond that, though, the Gospels writers present the events of that morning in quite distinct ways.

So even though we’ve all heard this one before, the story itself bears repeating. And the four versions merit our repeated attention. This year, I didn’t get very far into Matthew’s story before I noticed something unexpected: “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”

That is not what is supposed to happen. The women are supposed to bring spices to the tomb. I know, because I wrote a touching essay about it. The women offer practical service in the midst of their devastating grief, coming to the tomb to rub spices on Jesus’ body.

But apparently only Mark and Luke’s company of women do that. They are the no nonsense, get ‘er done, work through the tears kind of women. But Matthew’s Marys? They don’t have any spices. They don’t even have a real purpose as far as we can tell. They go simply to “see the tomb.”

“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”

It’s not much.

Our tendency is to either avoid places of death,—to not show up at the tomb at all—or to enter places of death with all of the tools we think we need to fix them.

Matthew’s account of the resurrection is a strong reminder of the deep truth of the Gospel: Bringing life from death is not our work to do.

It is God’s power that rolls away stones, God’s power that shatters graves and hauls life out of the pit of death. It is God’s power alone that enacts resurrection.

When we enter the graveyards, we do not need to bring a crane to lift the stone. We do not need to bring spices to anoint the body. We do not need to bring anything except ourselves.

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."

It's not much.

But it is enough. Their willingness to simply see the tomb—to be present with death—was enough to put them in place to be the first human witnesses to the resurrection.

And I believe God will honor our willingness to be present with death as well. There are many dark places in our world—even within our own communities, our own homes, our own selves. And we should not avoid these places. And we need not carry all the heavy tools we think we need to fix these places.

We don't need to drive around with a crane to move the rocks. We don't need to stash spices in our purses and pockets just in case.

God asks simply that we go and see.

Because that will put us in the place where we can experience the power of God at work. We can feel the earthquake and see the lightning and hear the truth proclaimed: "Jesus Christ is risen!" *He is risen indeed.*

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