

**Do not be afraid. He is risen. And he goes ahead of you.**

**Easter Sunday, April 5 2026**

*Psalm 118: 1–2, 14–2; Matthew 28:1–10*

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I heard someone say recently that Easter morning is a bit like trying to wake up teenagers for school after the holidays. You open the curtains, the light pours in, and you announce, “It’s time to get up!” And the response — if you get one at all — is usually a groan, a pillow over the head, or a very firm, “Five more minutes.” One parent told me they’d tried everything: gentle coaxing, loud singing, Hoovering under the bed, even the family dog. Nothing worked. Finally, in desperation, they shouted up the stairs, “There’s chocolate downstairs!” Suddenly there was movement. Resurrection power indeed.

And in a way, that’s not far from the first Easter morning. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary weren’t expecting anything dramatic. They weren’t bouncing with joy. They were doing what love does on the hardest days — showing up. And then, just like a teenager suddenly awakened by unexpected good news, the world shifted. Light broke in. Hope stirred. Something impossible had happened.

**“Do not be afraid... He is not here; he has been raised.”**

There’s something wonderfully human about the way Matthew tells the Easter story. It begins not with trumpets or choirs, but with two women walking quietly through the early morning light. Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” aren’t expecting a miracle. They’re simply doing what love does—showing up, even when hope feels thin.

They come to the tomb carrying grief, confusion, and loyalty. And that’s often how we come to God too. Not with perfect faith, but with whatever we can manage.

Psalm 118 gives us the language that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary must have felt rising in their hearts as they ran from the empty tomb. “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” The psalm begins with a call to give thanks because God’s steadfast love endures forever — a truth that Easter makes dazzlingly real. The psalmist

speaks of God becoming our strength and our salvation, of the stone the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone. In the resurrection, we see that promise fulfilled: the rejected one raised, the crucified one vindicated, the broken one restored. Easter is the ultimate “day the Lord has made,” a day when God turns despair into deliverance and opens the gates of righteousness wide. The joy of the women at the tomb echoes the psalm’s ancient song — a reminder that God’s saving love stretches from Israel’s worship to the garden of resurrection, and now into our own lives.

### **The earthquake moment**

Then everything changes. Matthew describes an earthquake—creation itself shaking with the news that death has lost its grip. An angel rolls back the stone, not to let Jesus out, but to let the women in. The resurrection doesn’t need our help; it needs our witness.

And the angel’s first words are the ones we need most: **“Do not be afraid.”** Not “pull yourself together.” Not “try harder.” Just: **“Do not be afraid.”** Because the world has changed. Because God has acted. Because the worst thing is no longer the last thing.

### **Fear and joy together**

I love that Matthew says the women ran from the tomb “with fear and great joy.” That combination feels honest. Easter doesn’t erase fear; it transforms it. It doesn’t pretend everything is fine; it declares that God is stronger than everything that isn’t.

And then—this is the heart of it—**Jesus meets them on the way.** Not in the temple. Not in a moment of perfect faith. But on the road, while they’re still breathless and unsure.

He greets them with a simple word: **“Greetings!”** Almost casual. Almost everyday. As if resurrection is not just a cosmic event but a personal encounter.

### **What Easter means for us**

Easter is not just about what happened *then*. It’s about what God is doing *now*.

- When we feel stuck, Easter says: **stones can be rolled away.**
- When we feel afraid, Easter says: **courage is possible.**
- When we feel alone, Easter says: **Christ meets us on the road.**
- When we feel the world is too broken, Easter says: **God is already at work in the cracks.**

The risen Christ sends the women to tell the others—because resurrection is always meant to be shared. Hope is not a private possession; it’s a gift that grows as we pass it on.

### **A final word**

So on this Easter morning, hear the message that echoed through the garden:

**Do not be afraid. He is risen. And he goes ahead of you.**

Wherever your road leads this week—into joy, into challenge, into the ordinary routines of life—the risen Christ is already there, waiting to greet you.

*Amen.*