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St. James', Mt. Airy
4/16/17

Easter Day A
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4
Matthew 28:1-10

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

There is a practice in the Orthodox tradition to tell jokes at Easter in honor of the joke that Jesus played on death in the resurrection.

Don't stop me if you've heard this one before.

Sara was a precocious 5 year old. She loved going to church and Sunday School, and she loved hearing stories about Jesus. On Palm Sunday she had a sore throat and had to stay home, while her mom and older brother went to church. When they came home carrying several palm fronds, she asked them what they were for.

"People waved them over Jesus' head as he walked by," her brother told her.

"Wouldn't you know it," Sara fumed, "the one Sunday I don't go and he shows up."

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In all seriousness, I'm going to keep it short and simple today.

If there's one thing I hope you remember on Wednesday – it's this quote from Nelson Mandela: **May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.**

The journey of Holy Week, in which we follow Christ's footsteps in that last week he spent in Jerusalem, were filled with fear.

From the fear the money-changers had when Jesus overturned their tables, to the fear of his friends the night he was arrested in the garden. From the fear that led Peter to deny Jesus three times, to the fear those who loved him felt as they stood at the foot of the cross where Jesus died.

Fear is what led the disciples to gather in the locked upper room after he was placed in the tomb.

Except for the Marys.

As the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary made the choice to step out of the shadow of fear and instead went to the tomb.

Whether they went in the hopes that the stories he had told about rising on the third day were true, or whether their hope in the abiding love of God that Jesus extended made them want to be close to him, they went to Jesus. They did not let their fear paralyze them.

When they arrived at the tomb, they were greeted an earthquake and an angel of the Lord sitting on the stone rolled away from the tomb. His appearance was like lightning, and it fearful enough to cause the guards to faint.

But the Marys did not run away. Rooted in hope, they were the first to hear the good news of the resurrection – the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death.

When they left to tell the other disciples, we are told they left quickly with fear and great joy.

They knew fear, but the choice to run and announce the resurrection to those in the upper room was made in hope – and that hope led them to be the first to encounter the risen Christ as well when he met them on the road.

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To make choices based on hope, not fear, is our call as followers of Christ here and now too.

To not be daunted by the fear in the world, but instead to meet it with hope.

To not let our hearts be hardened, but instead to cultivate relationships.

To not lock ourselves away, but instead to recklessly love.

My hope for all of us this Easter season is that **our choices reflect our hopes, not our fears** – and that in doing so our lives show forth the promise of the resurrection.

~ AMEN ~