

Before Reading the Gospel  
Reflection  
April 1, 2024  
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In the preceding verses, the women go to the tomb and an angel tells them do not be afraid, Jesus has been raised from the dead go and tell his disciples.

Rather than "be not afraid," the angel could have said--be amazed, be astonished Jesus has been raised from the dead.

None of us know how our lives will unfold. When we made our initial commitment to the congregation, when we married or started a new career or had a family, we couldn't have predicted the evolution our lives would take. The readings this week reflect this experience in the life of the disciples.

The readings invite us to be astonished and surprised about what we could never have imagined. Mary Oliver's poem "Messenger" reflects this reality when she tells us "My work is loving the world. . . Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work, which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished."

The readings from Acts this week are a proclamation of the amazing mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, healing in the name of Jesus and the disciples witnessing the risen Lord. How surprising and unexpected their courage after they had seen Jesus' die, denied him, run away and locked themselves in an upper room. The experience of the risen Jesus changed them.

The Gospels will relate various resurrection appearances. Today Jesus appears to the two Mary's who are on their way to tell the disciples the good news of Jesus resurrection. They meet Jesus who greets them with the same message of the angel: "do not be afraid and affirms their calling to **go and tell** my brothers to go to Galilee where they will see me. The male disciples haven't seen Jesus yet! It is the women who are the first to see him and become missionary disciples, even though women's testimony was discounted in their culture.

Jesus puts divisions and boundaries aside and shows his special care for those who would be ignored and marginalized. He sends them to be the first proclaimers of the good news.

These women were open to a new experience of Jesus' presence. The other disciples, too, would experience Jesus with them in the very ordinariness of their lives. . . by a seashore, in a garden, on a walk, eating together and they would be astonished that Jesus was risen and with them.

During this past 40 days, have we been transformed so we, too, are more open to the surprising and unexpected entrances of God's presence in our ordinary lives?

Has the new life of the risen Jesus touched our minds and hearts so that we are less afraid to go and tell one another and the world how much it is loved?

James Finley reminds us, "The greatest teacher of God's presence is our life." Can we let these Easter days be an acceptable time for us to stand and be amazed at all God has done and keeps doing in our lives? Will we let ourselves be surprised by the reality that Jesus is alive, with us and within us and meets us in the dailiness of our life experience?

If so, then we can pray with the psalmist:

I bless God who counsels me. . . I will not be disturbed. . . my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices, for you God are my hope. Amen. Alleluia!