

Covid-19 Easter Sermon by Pastor Jon Strasman on April 15, 2020  
Text: Matthew 28:1-10

## “Fear and Great Joy”

Alleluia Christ is Rise. Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

These words from Psalm 118 have new meaning for me this year. In a time when one day seems to spill into another, and many of us don't even get out of our pajamas each day, this Psalm reminds me view each day as a gift from God and to rejoice and be glad in it.

Related to this, one thing I always look forward to this time of year is watching the Masters. Today would have been the final round of the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, Georgia. It is now postponed until November. I miss watching the drama of the back nine on Sunday, seeing if the leaders can make it through Amen Corner.

In my spare time, I have been watching Youtube of the final rounds of all the great Master's finishes. Then, once you watch one thing, the data they collect on you suggests another. Then I clicked on an interview with Tiger Woods this week. He would have hosted the champions dinner at Augusta on Tuesday as the 2019 champion. Instead, he hosted a champion's dinner with his kids at home, complete with milkshakes for dessert. He said he has been home working on 2000 and 3000 piece puzzles with his kids. But Tiger revealed that he is not very good at puzzles... because he is colorblind. He said, “once the border is done, I'm useless.” His kids get tired of him asking “what color is this piece?” The interviewer from Golf Digest asked Tiger if he had any wisdom to share with the viewers like, “take it one day at a time.” Tiger corrected her and shared some wisdom from his father, a marine, who taught him “to take it one meal at a time.” For some reason, this really spoke to me. How can we rejoice and be glad one meal at a time during quarantine?

Then I clicked on an interview with Jim Nance, the voice of the Masters. He said Tiger's win last year at the Masters could very well be the greatest comeback story of all time.

I thought about that for a moment and have to say I know a better one. Easter. Easter is the greatest comeback story of all time. Jesus even called his shot. He predicted his resurrection three times to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew and to the religious authorities... destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. But they couldn't wrap their heads around it.

On Good Friday, it appeared that Jesus had lost the match to the powers who wanted him dead. Death won. The cross appeared to be the final word. But on Easter Sunday, God had a surprise in store for the world. God did a new thing. A new story was written. To quote Jim Nance... a win for the ages. This one filled with hope and new life for all of us.

According to Matthew's Easter Gospel, there was an earthquake on Easter Morning when the women arrived at the tomb. I think we can all relate to this idea right now of the ground shifting under our feet. I have never been in an earthquake, but I know they cause fear and trembling. You don't know how long they will last or what the aftershocks will be. Covid-19 has shifted the landscape we live in. We don't know how long it will last, or what the after affects will be. But our efforts of social distancing are flattening the curve. Keep it up. Stay home as much as possible. Wear you masks in public.

The angel who rolled back the stone proclaimed to the two Marys, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples... you will see him in Galilee."

The women did as the angel told them. They looked into the empty tomb and ran to tell the others... with fear and great joy. "With fear and great joy". How can we live with fear and great joy at the same time? This is the way Easter feels this year. Many of us are afraid of what is to come. But we don't have to let it paralyze us. We can still experience Easter joy as Christians. Remember, Joy is one of the

fruits of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit in our Baptism. And whenever we hear the good news of Jesus, the Spirit works faith and hope in us. So even in times of sadness we can see glimpses of joy through our faith.

After the women left the tomb, Jesus appeared to them. They had a moment and Jesus told them to go and tell the others. And this is our job as Easter People. We are to go and tell the others of Jesus' victory over death and our reason for hope. Alleluia Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen indeed, alleluia.