

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

The Word that Changed the World

Matthew 28:5,6

Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The little girl stood in darkness next to her mother's bed. She was afraid. The surgeon had cut out the cancer that was making her mom sick, and now her mother lay asleep, her neck hidden by bandages. The foundation of the girl's world was shaking, and to steady herself, the girl reached out, gently touched the bandages and whispered, "Mommy, is your neck going to be okay?" The mom squeezed her hand in reassurance as tears fell down both of their cheeks.

On the very first Easter, two women named Mary were also frightened and searching. They had placed all their hope in their friend and teacher, Jesus. Then on one awful Friday, their world turned dark as Jesus was tortured, crucified, and buried in a tomb. The women came to the garden tomb early Sunday morning to honor Jesus, but they could not find him. Suddenly, there was an angel who sat on the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb. He had a message that changed everything. It changed everything for the two women named Mary, for the little girl and her mother, and for you.

This message has the power to calm our fears and steady the shaky ground of this broken world. It even takes away the sting of death with the promise of heaven. The message of the angel was this: "You are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." What?! Could this really be? The women looked into the tomb—it was empty. Then Jesus met them, and they saw the truth. Jesus lives! And because he lives, we also will live.

The mom and little girl from the story above clung to the hope in the angel's message. For years they faced doctor scans and appointments with bold confidence. They still do. The angel's message continues to steady the ground beneath them. Whatever you are searching for, whatever is frightening you today, the angel's message can steady your feet. When this world seems a dark and scary place, remember, the resurrection of Jesus means we will also rise from the dead. Right now, Jesus prepares a place for us in heaven. Whatever happens here, for now and for eternity, heaven is ours.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What's the one thing that frightens you most?
- What's one thing you can do when you are afraid?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Name a way the message of Easter makes you less afraid.
- Why is it important for someone your age to think about death but then remember Easter?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Play out the result of this scenario: The women went to the tomb early Easter morning and found Jesus' body there.
- If the angel's message is important because it changed the world, explain how you would share it in a world today that is uninterested.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for conquering sin and death so that we can walk on solid ground. We know that because you live, we also will live. Praise be! Amen.