

“A bed of Easter Lillies” Mark 16:1-8 The Resurrection of Our Lord 2025
Alleluia. He is risen. He is risen, indeed. Alleluia.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable
in Thy sight,
O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Let's step back 2000 years and relive that blessed morning. It was a quiet morning. The air was still. They had planned to go first thing in the morning. They needed to get there early. There was much to be done, and it would still be cool. Some of the work had been done already. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had been with them on Friday. And His body was wrapped in linen, and with myrrh and spices. But there was still much to do.

The Sabbath had interrupted their work. The sun was about to set on Friday. They did what they could. And then they waited. When the sun went down on Saturday, they had gone shopping in the evening markets and bought the spices they needed.

Now it was just light, just enough light to see. So, they gathered their things together and started walking to the garden; these three women – Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. You have heard of Mary Magdalene before. She was from the town of Magdala, on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. Salome was the wife of Zebedee. She was the mother of James and John, the sons of thunder. Mary, the mother of James, was a different Mary, and the mother of a different James. James the Lesser, which doesn't sound too complimentary. He's called "lesser" because we think he was the younger of the two. Sometimes he's called James the Little. So, these two women are the mothers of Big Jim and Little Jim, as it were.

As these women were walking to the garden, and talking, they are thinking and start asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" Mary Magdalene and Little Jim's mother had seen Joseph of Arimathea roll the stone on Friday onto the entrance to the tomb. He had rolled by himself. So, one man ought to be able to move it. But they had seen its great size and knew that it was more than they could handle. They must not have known of the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb. They surely could have rolled the stone away. And the women express no concern that the guards will keep them out of the tomb. Only the stone.

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The guards were placed there by Pilate at the request of the chief priests, after Jesus was buried. And the women had not traveled back to the tomb on Saturday because of the Sabbath. So, they did know about the guards.

What is unusual is not that they are asking this question, “Who will roll away the stone?”, but that they are asking it now, at the last minute, as they are walking on their way. Women are such good planners. They go over all the details. One would expect that in preparing for this task, one of the three would have thought of it already, and they would have planned, and had one of the men come with them.

Thinking about it at the last minute, that is what men would do. “Let’s meet up at the cemetery.” “Okay.” And when they get there, and see the stone, then one of them goes back to get his tractor or front loader, or what have you. Guys are like that. Women plan it out. But we will give these three a pass, because they had much on their minds and hearts.

Jesus – their friend, teacher, and leader, - had just died. More than that – he had been killed - crucified. There was a lot weighing on their minds. But the thought of the moment was their problem – Who will roll the stone away? How are we going to get into that tomb?

The three women wondered how to get into the tomb. We have no such problem. Getting into the grave is not difficult for us: it is no problem at all. Just read the daily obituaries. Every day more people are finding their graves. They get there by different ways. Some die of natural causes – old age. Others die from sickness or disease: heart attacks, cancer. Still others die a sudden and unexpected death. Unpleasant as it is, we have no difficulty getting into the tomb.

On the contrary, we fight to stay out of the tomb. Some of us exercise. Some of us eat right. And whether we eat right or not, just the act of eating is part of our battle to stay out of the tomb. We may eat too much because it tastes good. But fundamentally we eat because if we don’t, we die. We have good doctors and great hospitals. Yet in the end, we lose this battle. We end up inside the tomb.

Why do we fight the grave so much? Because staying out of the tomb is the smaller problem. Just like there was a Big Jim and a Little Jim, when it comes to graves and tombs, we have a little problem and a big problem. The little problem is staying out of the grave. The big problem is like the seemingly

“A bed of Easter Lillies” Mark 16:1-8 The Resurrection of Our Lord 2025 impossible task which these three women faced. Only ours is not how to get into the tomb, but how to get out.

The women could not get into the tomb by themselves. And starting out earlier, so they could work at it longer, would not have helped. They needed someone to open the tomb for them.

When the women reached the garden, they saw the stone was already rolled away. And when they went into the tomb, they saw an angel. He said, “He is not here, He is risen.”

Like the women, opening the grave is an impossible task. And starting earlier or working harder or longer won't help. The dead weight of our tombstone won't budge. To get out, we need someone to open the tomb for us. Christ went into the tomb. As all men do, as we must do. But He was not trapped by death or the grave. He overcame them. He got into the tomb, but then He came out. Living and Victorious. Baptized in Him, and in His Name, we also live. St Paul tells us, Romans Chapter 6:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his; we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

He lives, and so we live. Christ has come out of the grave. He is risen, living, and ascended.

God has not promised us a bed of roses. Life will have its ups. It will also have its downs. One of those downs is the grave. We will still face it. We will still go into the tomb. And while He has not promised us a bed of roses, He has given us a bed of Easter Lilies. For in Him, we will not die, but sleep. Even as each night we go into our beds, and rise again in the morning to live, our graves shall be but a bed of Easter Lilies. For Christ shall return, and He shall raise us again to live, even as He is resurrected. All who are baptized and trust in Him will live with Him forever in the world to come. As we sing in the hymn verse by Thomas Ken:

Teach me to live that I may dread

The grave as little as my bed.

Teach me to die that so I may

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Rise glorious at the judgement Day.

And so we proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died. Christ is risen.

Christ shall come again.

Alleluia. He is risen. He is risen, indeed. Alleluia.

Amen.