

Go Quickly and Tell, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. X1080323
Acts 10:34-43 and Matthew 28:1-10
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 23 March, 2008

I thought it would be nice to preach a sermon about daffodils, magnolias, chocolate Easter bunnies and colored eggs, but God has broken into my world and interrupted my week. I had to fill up my car with gasoline and found a "deal" at \$3.16 per gallon. I read that the mortgage-lending crisis has now spread to investment banking companies with the value of Bear Stearns falling in one week from \$75.00 to \$2.00 a share.¹ A young mother of three girls aged seventeen months to seven years has contracted aggressive lung cancer. Fox news network has endlessly re-played snippets of the pastor of the largest congregation in the United Church of Christ saying that God will condemn the United States. And, in the week just past, this nation of mine observed the fifth anniversary of the senseless invasion of Iraq. God always has ways of invading our world and spoiling our schedules and our sweet colorful images of how things are.

Early on that first Easter, according to Matthew, two Marys went to Jesus' tomb. They went to perform an act of love-to anoint Jesus' body because they had been forbidden by law to do that on the Sabbath. In their sorrow, they slowly made their way to that lonely place. The women were afraid, not only because of an earthquake, a displaced stone, and an angel, but also because their lives had been drastically altered with Jesus' crucifixion and death.

Jesus had preached the kingdom of God in opposition to the kingdom of Rome and Caesar. That domination system, supported by the temple leadership in Jerusalem, could not allow Jesus to continue his ministry. He was too popular with the crowds. With the help of a collaborator, they arrested him in a lonely place, tried, tortured, and mocked him, and put him to death in a fashion reserved for traitors and insurrectionists. Jesus had preached the kingdom of God where all people are valued as God's children and where everybody has enough-not that everybody has the same, but everybody has enough. He preached a way of non-violence, forgiveness, compassion and love.

But, what Jesus preached was threatening to the rich and powerful. He said things that they did not want to hear, the same way Jeremiah and the other prophets said things to their principalities and powers seven centuries before. Jesus was crucified. These women were the only disciples who stayed close to Jesus. They were there as the nails were hammered into his hands and feet.

If Jesus were here today, he would be confronting principalities and domination systems the same way he did then. He would ask why we permit Exxon Mobil to make \$11.66 billion last quarter, their highest profit ever.² He would probably ask us also, why we drive our cars so much, and so often with only one person in them. Jesus would probably ask why our administration would use taxpayer dollars to guarantee a loan for J. P. Morgan Chase to purchase Bear Stearns. He would wonder why we permitted lending institutions to make foolish and greedy loans in a bloated housing market. He would also wonder why, when executive take home pay was twenty-two times that of workers in Great Britain, it was four hundred seventy-five times that of workers

¹*Telegraph.co.uk*, 23 March, 2008

²*CNN Money.com* 1 February, 2008

in the U. S.³ Is this helping to assure that everyone has enough? Jesus would sternly remind us that war is not the way to confront despots and dictators. The man who taught us to turn the other cheek would probably tell us that education and the feeding of the hungry are the ways that lead to understanding and the resolution of differences. He would once again lead a peaceful procession into Jerusalem or Washington, the way he did on that first Palm Sunday. And, if Jesus were here today, he would be in the hospital rooms of young mothers fighting cancer.

Jesus is here today! That stone cold tomb could not confine him in death. Jesus was resurrected and we celebrate that resurrection today. The church is the body of Christ. Faithful Christians the world over are the resurrection. Jesus is present in hospital rooms in the form of caring medical staffs and loving visitors and baby-sitting friends and relatives. Wherever there is compassion, wherever there is an attempt at understanding, there is the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus is here today! He was here on Wednesday evening in the form of five church members as they welcomed a Burmese family into a new home and a new hope. Jesus is here today at a communion table to which all are invited to taste of the kingdom of heaven.

The angel said to the two Marys, “Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.” He went on, “He is not here! For he has been raised from the dead. Come see the place where he lay.” The crucified Jesus is not to be found in the tomb because God raised him from the clutches of death. Jesus has been crucified, but not entombed. Jesus cannot be held down by domination systems.

The angel said, “Go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’” The two women left the tomb in fear and joy. The Greek word for joy is “*megalys charas*.” that is like saying “Mega-joy.” That is a great description for Easter: the news of Jesus’ resurrection brings “megajoy” to his followers.

The women went on their way – quickly. That is when they ran into Jesus – not in Galilee, but on the way. We don’t find Jesus in the tombs, in the past, or where we were or where we were going, but in between: on the way. He will surprise you as you go on your way, as you live your life, and as you live a life for others.

In Jesus’ commission there is both fear and joy: fear because of the awesomeness of Christ’s victory over death, and joy because of the good news!

Mega joy. Easter joy. Go quickly and tell the world that Jesus lives!

³Figures from *Now with Bill Moyers*