

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, December 5, 2021

“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”
(Revelation 11:13)

In my final sermon on the seven trumpets that sound, finally ushering in the second advent of our Christ, I turn a little bit of attention to these words of John. Uniquely, I mean, the portion of the passage underlined above. I then said “*the word [affrighted] has a second meaning: ‘reverence for one’s husband’.* What reverence will those saints feel when, to the very last letter of the script, the promises are fulfilled. What are they to do?” In context there ... when all of the things written by the prophets, including some very hard-to-imagine and horrible things, with what amazement will the saints of God consider what must be about to happen? Of course, the next thing that does happen is the seventh trumpet sounds and the long-awaited event of Christ’s return in power occurs.

That energy is what I’m wanting to discuss today.

All four of the gospels speak of the events surrounding the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Ben has been speaking with us for 11 in-depth sermons, since July 2020, regarding the final engagements of that Christ with His apostles before he goes to His death. And today we will be engaging in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. So, it seemed a good idea to bring the discussion of His resurrection to this body, as I was mightily impressed with them of recent. The resurrection of our Savior is integral to the opening of the period that closes at His triumphant return in Revelation:

***“Until the day in which [Christ] was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:2-3, 9-11)**

Since these matters are found in various expressions within the four gospels, I want to break down the discussion into some logical parts so we can enjoy them with some distinction:

- The visitors at the sepulcher
- The presentation of angels
- Dialog between the angels and visitors
- Dialog with the Savior

***“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”* (Matthew 28:1)**

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“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.” (Mark 16:1-4)

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“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.” (Luke 24:1-3)

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“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.” (John 20:1)

Four different articulations put together a picture of three women who had a keen interest in what was going to be the outcome of this harrowing event. These three, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John had, for varied reasons saturated themselves with the knowledge of what Jesus had come to do. They ministered to Him through his time preaching and when he was hung on the cross, they stood by watching.

“And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.” (Matthew 27:55-56)

The expositor John Trapp articulates that scene with these touching and expressive words: *“Love is strong as death; good blood will never belie itself. Mary also the mother of Jesus was there, sitting with the sword through her heart, that old Simeon had fortold to her [i.e., ‘Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also’ Luke 2:35]”* These women were not just passive bystanders who wandered into this scene of Christ’s death and resurrection. It is comforting for me to draw the conclusion that these blessed servants knew what had been spoken of the matter and they were in a spirit to rush out and see what was to come of those blessed and eternal promises. Was Jesus going to be raised, the Christ of the Covenant of Grace? Was the Redeemer going to show Himself strong in the performance of the promises, by conquering death and hell?

In two of the passages above it says that the women brought with them some *“spices”* to use in anointing the body of Christ. After witnessing His death, it is said that these *“returned, and prepared spices and ointments” (Luke 23:56)*, but then could go no further in their plans at that point because it was considered unlawful to buy or use these spices on the sabbath day. So they waited until they were clear it was no longer unlawful to act on their inclination toward Jesus’ dead body, and then they sprang into action. One view of this instance is that these women had some reservation about whether Christ would be resurrected. The prophecy is that *“he should still live for ever, and not see corruption” (Psalms 49:9)*, which would mean there was no need of spices and ointments to counteract the stink of it. Dr. Gill, in expounding the words in Mark’s account, offers:

“That they might come and anoint him; with those sweet spices, as was the manner of the Jews: hence we read [] ‘the spices of the dead’; which were used to expel an ungrateful savour: this they did, out of affection to Christ, but seemed to have no faith in his resurrection, though he had told them of it, which they had forgot. The Vulgate

Latin reads, 'that they might anoint Jesus'; the Ethiopic version, 'anoint his body': but the Arabic thus, 'anoint the sepulchre'; his body being anointed before, and wound up by Joseph and Nicodemus; and therefore they came to strew the sepulchre with spices and ointments, and give it a sweet perfume. Though it seems most likely, that they came to anoint his body; for this was one of the things which was customary in Israel to do to dead men, as Maimonides {f} observes, [], 'they anoint him with various sorts of spices'."

So what if we conclude that these three women – with whom our spirits are certainly knit in love toward our Christ – did in fact go to that sepulcher with at least the thought that they would find a corpse of a man that needed spices to counteract the smell of corrupted flesh? What instruction do we gain? It seems near impossible that an elect person who is watching the prophecies unfold right before her eyes would not be filled with joy and confidence and assurance that since He was crucified and slain just as it was promised ... He would likewise be resurrected from that bodily death just as was promised. But we also occupy this human flesh, with all of the perpetual tendency of that flesh to be in conflict with our spirit, as James articulates:

"Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James 4:5)

The eternal God could have moved in those sweet women to be utterly devoid of the slightest question or doubt about the certainty that Christ would cast off the shackles of bodily death and rush out to that sepulcher for no reason other than to rejoice at the glories of that sight. I know that's where I would want to be in my spirit. But when we are witnessing the power of God, we do so imprisoned in these bodies of flesh and sin. That is what is meant when Paul says ***"we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."*** (2 Corinthians 4:7). I love these women, and their kindnesses and simple charity toward the saints and toward their Christ and their weakness in this small instance is quickly overrun as we see upon their arrival. I love that too.

"And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." (Matthew 28:2-4)

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"And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted." (Mark 16:5)

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"And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:" (Luke 24:4)

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"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." (John 20:11-12)

The first three reports of these events in the gospels have very similar presentations, though not in all points capturing the same nuances of the way things went. For example, Matthew's account articulates the angel

“descended from heaven”. This descent from heaven, if we apply simple grammatical rules, causes **“a great earthquake”** – though we are not told expressly that the women who came either saw the descent or made a connection between that and the earthquake. From the other three accounts, the women saw the result of the angel’s actions – that the stone was rolled (or taken) away from the sepulcher. That is what is most important to their joy and comfort and edification.

Matthew’s account of the explosive appearance of one angel appears rather to give us a glimpse of what was done with regard to these **“keepers”** who were sent by the Jewish leadership, to wit:

“Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.” (Matthew 27:62-66)

The colorful John Trapp offers these explanatory words: **“Now the next day that followed]** *That is, on that high day, that double sabbath, they that had so often quarrelled with Christ for curing on the sabbath request a servile work to be done, of securing and sealing up the sepulchre. It is a common proverb, Dead men bite not. But here Christ, though dead and buried, bites and beats hard upon these evil men’s consciences. They could not rest the whole night before, for fear he should get out of the grave some way, and so create them further trouble. ... Something like to this the prophet Isaiah foretelleth of our Saviour (and we see it here accomplished), when he saith, “In that day the root of Jesse shall stand up for an ensign to the people, and even his rest” (or, as some read it, his sepulchre) “shall be glorious,” (Isaiah 11:10). There are those who think that these words, “The day that followed the day of the preparation,” are put ironically, or rather by way of a facetious jesting [] against the hypocritical sabbatism of the high priests, who would so workday-like, beg the body, seal the sepulchre, and set the watch on that sabbath, for the which they seemed to prepare so devoutly before it came.”*

Yes indeed. Here we have the face of these faithless brutes who **“profess that they know God; but in works they deny him”** (Titus 1:16). They knew what Christ said ... and they knew that their own prophets had declared this amazing work, though they lacked the faith and wisdom given to the saints to understand how vital that work was to the Covenant of Grace. **“[F]or had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”** (1 Corinthians 2:8) The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ being so necessary a part of the mystery of the gospel, these malicious men were feverishly casting aside they’re pretended faith to kill Him and keep Him in the grave! The telling of it was also brought to us through Matthew, the only of the gospel authors to include this piece of the report. So, it is perfectly fitting that he also include this report that those grotesque and blasphemous men were given to see just a glimpse of the power of these messengers as they come to conduct this honorable business. Trapp’s comments on this component are equally precise and colorful: **“The keepers did shake]** *And well they might, as coming to see they had borne arms against God, and were therefore obnoxious to his wrath. It is a fearful thing to fall into the punishing hands of the living God here: how then will wicked men bear the horror of the last day, when they shall have an angry God over them, hell gaping beneath them, an accusing conscience within them, the world all on alight fire about them, the elements melting like scalding lead upon them, the good angels testifying against them [], the evil angels waiting to worry them, and hurry them to hell? Oh the unspeakable achings and quakings of heart, the terrible apprehensions, the convulsions of spirit, that shall seize and surprise them at that dreadful day!”*

Then, having quite handled those malicious watchers or keepers – who later reported **“unto the chief priests all the things that were done”** (Matthew 28:11) and received some more malicious directives – these angels

went to their appointed business of standing by to **“minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” (Hebrews 1:14)**. Some ministering was here required, to help those of God’s saints who were in the vortex of this creation-shaking event. The women were given to see them there. The expositors are quite convinced that there were only two in this place ... **“the one at the head, and the other at the feet”** of where Christ was lain. But we have the other expression in Luke’s account of **“two men stood by them in shining garments”**. We can dance with this dynamic by suggesting they were first standing and then sitting, so the accounts are being recorded at different points in the exchange with the women ... or we can be satisfied that we have an army of them present and those who are given to the women to see are seen. Our spiritual father Jacob told us that he saw the **“angels of God ascending and descending” (Genesis 28:12)** as though it is a perpetual state of things between heaven and earth. Christ Himself said to Nathaniel **“Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:51)**. Are we to conclude from these passages that it was only in those instances when that activity was afoot? Or are we rightly to understand that this is a continual activity that has gone on since the creation of the earth and the Adamic race ... but only at appointed times and places will those of this race be given to see them ... and in the exact number needed for the necessary work to be done in our spirits? Whatever we conclude on this point in the events around the sepulcher of Christ, we know that angels ministered to Christ in His life (e.g., Mark 1:13), and it would be of no surprise that they would be in full rank and file ministering to His resurrection and the hearts and spirits of His servants who are joined in that matter from eternity past.

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.” (Matthew 28:5-7)

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“And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” (Mark 16:6-7)

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“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, **The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words,” (Luke 24:5-8)**

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“And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” (John 20:13)

These are all the places in these accounts where there is some form of dialog between the women and the angels they were given to see. Twice, it was expressly said that Christ would rise again on the third day:

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” (Matthew 16:21)

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“And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Matthew 20:19)

As we may hear from Ben in closer and more thorough examination going forward with his sermon series, Christ was crucified on Friday ... at about 3:00 in the afternoon, or ***“about the ninth hour [when] Jesus cried with a loud voice”*** and ***“having [cried out] he gave up the ghost”*** (Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46). When that evening at 6:00 came, the sabbath was considered to have begun so they were rushed to get Jesus’ body down from the cross and into the sepulcher. When I was a younger man, this matter was vetted at some length during sermons about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. When the scripture says ***“the third day”***, we are to understand that to be *the third day* after Jesus died – not 72 hours after Jesus died – he would rise again. He having given up the ghost around 3:00p on Friday; that is the first day. The sabbath day (Saturday) is the second day for the whole 24 hours from the 12th hour on Friday to the 12th hour on Saturday. The third day, as reckoned in Jewish culture, can be said to begin at 6:00 am on Sunday morning. So, the promise of the resurrection of the body of Christ on ***“the third day”*** can be said to be fulfilled if we begin on the day it is entombed and end on the third day afterward ... part of Friday, all of Saturday, and any part of Sunday. If this is accomplished, the prophecy is fulfilled. This matters, because it explains why early on Sunday morning – ***“the first day of the week ... when it was yet dark”*** (John 20:1) – Mary Magdalene showed up at the sepulcher looking for the body of Christ.

Clearly it was a faltering of faith at work with these women. I know that we here who ***“by reason of use have [had] their senses exercised”*** (Hebrews 5:14) understand that in the crucible of severe testing or great trial we both grow in faith and stumble in faith. Examples of such are numerous with the saints identified in the Bible. So, when we look at what went on between the angels and these women, we need to be humble ... not haughty. This is acutely weighty to me as I think on the prospects of the Day of the Lord coming upon this church – if it be written in providence. When we read of the severity of events ... the fulfilment of so much prophecy ... the intensity of hatred ... the clarity of resolution ... the power of Antichrist and the False Prophet ... to think of the weakness of our flesh at that hour is distressing. To think of how we might have moments of perplexity because we have been exposed to the perpetual onslaught of “the sky is red” from this generation, or as is put by the prophet Malachi in identifying the wearying of the Lord with their vain and blasphemous words: ***“every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?”*** (Malachi 2:17). When the fight is joined in earnest it becomes quite an acute thing to consider the rhetorical question: ***“if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear”*** (1 Peter 4:18).

Some expositors look at these words from the angels and suggest that they are chastening the women who have come to seek Jesus. While I can clearly see a correcting tone in their expressions – much more I see an earnest intent to help them. They are ministering to them ... comforting them ... helping their fear to be translated to joyful understanding that Christ is ***“God, and [His] words be true, and [He] has promised this goodness unto [His] servant”*** (2 Samuel 7:28). It is good in battle to have our weakness helped – and the Bible shows how that is sometimes through the supernatural ability to see angels at work. Elisha prayed for the young man to see that ***“the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”*** (2 Kings 6:17). Mary the mother of Jesus was given previously the blessing of the angel Gabriel, as she struggled with the discomfiting reality that she was pregnant, though a virgin (Luke 1:26-38)ⁱ. I do not know – nor am I so presumptuous as to

advocate – when or if any soul in this house will be given such a sight. I know what is recorded, and I know that we can take great comfort that when matters of great moment are at issue it is the work of God to make His angels known to His human servants as needed to help and comfort them. None of these matters required the presence of the angels to articulate things to these women. Christ’s resurrection would have been just as sure if the angels were not present. But the women were given this precious gift of help. They were shown that the physical evidence was without dispute. That Christ was indeed resurrected, even as His sepulchre was sealed and was under watch by deceitful men and tyrants. What rejoicing when so kind and powerful a help is given. It is of God.

“And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” (Matthew 28:8-10)

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“And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.” (Mark 16:8-10)

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“And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” (John 20:14-17)

The effects of seeing the matters unfold, particularly with the added evidence presented by these ministering spirits, is said here to bring upon the women ***“fear and great joy”*** so that they ***“trembled and were amazed [and] were afraid”*** This energy, I submit, does not display the servile fear of the faithless, because we are plainly told that the elect have been given ***“the spirit [] of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)*** The Greek word translated ***“sound mind”*** means ***“self-control, moderation”*** and is used only once in the Bible. We don’t get worked up with frenzied nonsense about conspiracy theories or numerology. We are given the gift of strong discipline in our thinking – about things of God, and about all things. Like the description of the saints (as four beasts) in the Revelation, ***“full of eyes before and behind [and] within” (Revelation 4:6, 8)*** – meaning they have sharp vision of history, of eschatology, and of themselves! This is important, because it impacts how the events ordered to fall out to the saints effect those souls. They are not knocked down and terrified ... as this passage intimates occurred to the keepers who ***“did shake, and became as dead”***.

Instead, they are filled with an energy of reverence toward the open display of unhuman power. When those blessed remnant who are dwelling in Jerusalem in the moments – the very moments – before Christ is appointed to pierce the ether with great power and a throng of saints to usher in the taking of His earthly kingdom, they witness this unhuman power. The two witnesses, whose dead bodies were laying in the streets for ***“three days***

and an half” (Revelation 11:9), suddenly are returned to life and are taken into the clouds where “their enemies beheld them” (id. v. 12). Then the “great earthquake [in which] a tenth part of the city fell [and] seven thousand” were slain (id. v. 13). The saints see all of this ... they know that it means Christ’s second advent is directly upon them. They know that when He returns, they will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52), though they also are aware that “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation” (Luke 17:20). What energy will pulse through them when they see the fulfillment of so many prophecies directly in their presence?

That kind of energy is in these blessed women as they see the servants of God tending to the business of this promised resurrection. These women have such a desire to see their Christ ... to know with their own flesh and blood minds that He is resurrected as they know it was written and said. Not the Christ in the form of man, whom they knew and loved in the fleshly realm, but the eternal Christ that conquered the enemies of death and hell. We here want to see that same Christ if it would be so. Those saints appointed to be present at His second advent will be utterly consumed with this very reasonable and disciplined anticipation, when they **“lift up [their] heads; for [their] redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:28). They will be “affrighted, and [give] glory to the God of heaven”.**

So, when these blessed women see Him – when He reveals Himself to them for their comfort and edification – they grab hold of His feet to worship Him to show their reverence and affection. An altogether understandable response, and one that our pride and arrogance will prevent us from doing in our spirits ... except the Lord be merciful unto us. This, again, is not stupid, ritualistic genuflection – like we see throughout this dark world of human-worshippers. This is a sober and precise understanding of who it is with whom they are engaged. The risen Christ! No longer imprisoned in the flesh, as it says of Him:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

Now He is the conquering Christ – the Redeemer who has successfully taken up His life again (John 10:17) and is preparing matters for His return to sit **“down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).** We should not be looking at these sweet sisters of ours as ignorant or emotional. They’re knowledgeable. They’re clear on the writings of prophets. Christ’s mother was plainly told by the angel Gabriel:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

This is serious and eternal business – before which we would all be wise to make ourselves prostrate if providential affairs presented the opportunity. Even now, in our spirits, we should be in a continual state of praise and adoration and thanksgiving for this great election and the sacrifice made for our eternal souls.

Finally, please do not let yourselves make too much of Christ’s commandment to them not to touch Him. Clearly it was not to prevent the touching, as they are said to have taken hold of His feet in worship. This is about the urgency of tending to the business of **“shew[ing] himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).** Matters are appointed and it is time to get after that business. What is being stayed here is the lingering. They were told

to go and report to the brethren what they have seen ... and that Christ is headed to Galilee for to visit with His brethren before He ascends up to His Father.

There is more to this event ... including the engagements with the apostles and their own battles with faith, their own mourning, their own exchanges with the risen Christ. My interest here was in the remarkable actions of these three blessed women and the kindness of our Father in letting them see the work of the angels and their very Christ upon His resurrection. These matters should be always on our minds. If we are blessed by God to be among those who will be in the church militant state at His second advent, these events should echo in our spirits as we see the conclusion of what was begun at His resurrection:

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
(Acts 1:9-11)

I love you all. Amen.

ⁱ Here is the text of the exchange between the angel and Mary at the conception of Christ:

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1:26-38)