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“Be not afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me”
(Matt 28:10).

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Matt 28: 8-15

Despite differences in detail, all four Gospels have the tradition of the empty tomb as essential to the church’s claim that Jesus rose from the dead. Matthew takes up what must have been a persistent counter claim that the disciples stole Jesus’ body, challenging the logic of saying that the soldiers guarding the tomb were asleep when this happened, adding that they were bribed to support this fiction.

Like his virgin birth in a hillside cave, the empty tomb protects Jesus’ mysterious arrival and departure from this world. The burial and resurrection scenes in a garden also provide rich biblical context for his mission to undo original sin by his death and resurrection. From womb to tomb, Jesus’ birth and death have extraordinary implications for all mankind.

Matthew, like Mark, also emphasizes that the disciples were to regroup in Galilee to encounter the risen Jesus. This had special meaning for believers who challenged subsequent efforts to enshrine the tomb or the mount of the Ascension as Jesus’ point of departure from this world and where he would return in glory. No, Matthew insists, Jesus has not left the world but has gone ahead of the disciples into the world. That’s where we will find him.

Matthew’s famous parable of the Last Judgement (25:31-46) tells us where Jesus is; among the poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned and outcast of the world, waiting to be served. His Real Presence is among the least of his brothers and

sisters, and this makes the Corporal Works of Mercy the surest way for us to find, worship and serve him.

Easter Week begins a time for us to absorb the mystery and to align our lives with the ongoing mission of the crucified and risen Christ in the world. The Easter season lasts for 50 days until Pentecost, when we will celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be his presence and to take up this redemptive work with him.

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