



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### April 7, 2024

## Eclipses, earthquakes, signs from God

Recap of sermon from April 7, 2024

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10

The writer of the Gospel of Matthew cranked up the special effects to tell the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. At the moment of Jesus' death, "from noon until three the whole earth was dark... Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split" (Matthew 27:45, 51). As Matthew continues the story, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. Look, there was a great earthquake... Now [the angel's] face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow."

Earthquakes. Darkness. Lightning. Brilliant white. These are great, cosmic events that are meant to reveal the power of God and the frailty of humanity. We are but mortal creatures living in a world that is acted upon by great forces. This week, eclipses and earthquakes have reminded us again of this truth.

There are many that responded to the events of the last week with great fear. Politicians and religious leaders called the earthquakes and eclipses signs of impending doom. They used these moments of great natural phenomenon to strike fear, rally support, and champion the cause of repentance (and while I may agree that our nation needs to repent, I don't think they and I agree on what exactly we need to repent of). Both ancient and modern people interpret times of unnatural darkness, earthquakes, and "natural" disasters as signs of God's activity in the world. There is an element of awe, wonder, and fear that comes with these moments.

How people react to fear hasn't changed much since these Biblical accounts. "Fight, Flight, or Freeze" is the short-handed way to describe our instinctual fear response. The gospels reveal all three responses. In Matthew, the guards are emblematic of freeze. They are scared to the point that they become "like dead men." This of course, is ironic, because they are supposed to be guarding a real dead man. The only one dead however, are the guards who are dead from fear.

The Gospel of Mark tells us of the flight response. In Mark's gospel the women flee from the tomb and tell no one what happened. Matthew however, gives us the "fight" response. This not a physical, violent fight. It is a determined



fight that Mary and the other Mary take up. In response to the fearful moments, they fight by taking up their commission. They do their job. They go and tell the disciples what has happened. When they do, the encounter Jesus.

They throw themselves at his feet before he even has a chance to say, "Fear not." They do not experience resurrection in the quakes and the darkness. They are able to see Jesus when they take up their mission and begin the work as the first apostles.

Today we can react to the quakes and darkness with fear. In fact, fear is a natural reaction. The question is, what do we do with that fear? Fear is still a tool of the powerful to keep people frozen or fleeing. They count on fear being a disruptor, a divider, and a destroyer. Instead, we can respond to fear like the Marys. Inspired by their courage and leadership, we can choose to fight.

Not a violent fight of weapons and anger. A righteous fight of community and courage. While others are pointing to signs of the times to instill fear and panic, we can be a people of faith. We remember that Jesus was not found in the eclipses and quakes. He was found when the women did the work of discipleship. He was found when they did not freeze. They did not flee. They fought. They fought for kindness, grace, generosity, forgiveness, and love. So yes, maybe we need to repent, and turn away from fear and division and toward grace and love.

**Next Week: Worship at Camp Milan for  
Native American Ministries Sunday**