

Bible Verse: Mark 16:6-7 (NIV) “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

Today’s story happens just outside the city of Jerusalem, near the place where Jesus was crucified, where he died on a cross on Good Friday.

Late on that sad Friday afternoon, a friend of Jesus named Joseph of Arimathea asks for permission to take Jesus’ body to his own new stone burial tomb nearby. Joseph and his friends have to hurry because the Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday.

The soldiers take the dead body of Jesus off of the cross. Joseph carries Jesus to his tomb. He quickly wraps the body of Jesus in a cloth and leaves it inside. A heavy stone is rolled across the entrance. The stone tomb, like a cave carved out of a rock, will protect the body of Jesus until women can bring special cloths and wrappings and perfumes to care for the body after the Sabbath is over. Soldiers are sent to guard the tomb.

So the body of Jesus lays inside the rock all of Friday night and all of Saturday, the Sabbath Day, and all of Saturday night until Sunday morning. When the sun is rising on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph and some other women come to finish caring for the body of Jesus. They are a little nervous that they won’t be strong enough to roll away the stone and get inside to do their work. But - - surprise! As they arrive, the women feel the earth shake. An angel appears and rolls away the cover stone. Matthew’s gospel says that the angel is white and shining and sits on the stone. Luke’s gospel says there are two shining angels and they are standing inside the tomb.

The body of Jesus is gone. The place where it lay is empty. Burial cloths are left behind on the floor. The angels say that Jesus has risen from the dead and they should watch for him and tell the other disciples.

In John’s gospel, Mary asks a gardener where the body has gone, and then realizes that the Gardener is actually Jesus, alive!

The women run to share the good news. Jesus has risen from death. His tomb is empty.

During the season of Easter, we read about the many times that the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples on earth. We remember the empty tomb, and we celebrate that the risen Jesus is present in our lives today.

Wonder Question: How afraid would you be if you saw an angel standing in front of you?

