

. . . *apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)

When the resurrected Lord meets us in the midst of the upheavals and disillusionments of life, we have strength and hope to continue the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven.

A. The upheavals and disillusionments of life

Life is full of *upheavals* and *disillusionments*. We sang about this together with *Psalms 42*. As a deer longs for streams of flowing water, so my soul *thirsts* for God. That's how a person can thirst for the *sustaining* presence of God. This is especially so in the *midst* of the upheavals and disillusionments of life because these upheavals and disillusionments can sap our strength and undermine our hope. What the psalmist felt and we sometimes feel, the *women* who had followed the Lord Jesus must also have felt. Mark mentions a few of them who had watched Jesus die from a distance by *name*: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome, the mother of James and John. When the Lord Jesus was in *Galilee*, they followed him and ministered to him. They had *believed* in the Lord Jesus and had expected him to do great things with regard to the kingdom of God when he had gone to Jerusalem (Mk. 10:35-37). Now they were disillusioned and without hope in the coming kingdom of heaven. What the women felt, *Joseph of Arimathea*, a senator in the city council, also felt, for just like the women, he too was looking for the kingdom of God. Like the women, he had *responded* in faith to the preaching of John the Baptist about someone coming after him in whom they would need to believe. And so, when the *Lord Jesus* appeared on the scene with the message of faith and repentance because the kingdom of God was near, he had placed his trust in him. Because he respected the Lord Jesus, he made sure Jesus was *buried* before the Sabbath. Like the women, he too was disillusioned and without hope with regard to the coming kingdom of heaven.

B. When the resurrected Lord meets us in the midst of the upheavals and disillusionments of life, we have strength and hope to continue the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven.

Because Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph had watched where Joseph had buried the Lord Jesus, they *knew* where to find his tomb on the first day of the week. And so, when the Sabbath was past, three of them went to the tomb early in the morning so that they could *anoint* the corpse in order to suppress the smell of death. In their sorrow, however, they had forgotten about the huge *stone* in front of the tomb. But when they arrived at the tomb, the stone was already *moved*. Upon entering the tomb, they are *alarmed* when they see an angel sitting where Jesus' corpse should have lain. Yet, he tells them not to be alarmed because the one they are looking for has *arisen* from the dead. The *empty* tomb is proof! While the resurrected Lord himself is elsewhere, *he* is meeting the women in the upheaval and disillusionment of their life in the message of the angel. Implied in the message that he had arisen from the dead is that his suffering and death is the *gate* to the kingdom of heaven. In order to be able to *enter* into this kingdom the twin problems of sin and death had to be dealt with. Now that he had victoriously *dealt* with them, he demonstrated this by *rising* from the dead with a glorified, spiritual body. This is the kind of *body* all those who believe in him would also one day receive: a body that would never get sick and die as well as a body fully indwelt by the holy Spirit, forever living in a perfect fellowship of love with God and one another. This is what *eternal* life in essence is all about. No *opposition* can stop the triumphal march to this kingdom of heaven! Not even *death*! When the

women believe this glorious good news of the resurrected Christ, they have *hope* in the midst of their upheaval and disillusionment. Moreover, they have *strength* to continue the journey to the kingdom of heaven they are looking for, for the resurrected Christ will sustain them on this journey with his own resurrection power. The strength and hope the women receive to continue the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven, the *disciples* will also receive for the angel tells the women to go and tell the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples. The disciples *could* know for sure the women are telling the truth because they would tell them that the Lord Jesus is going before them to Galilee. This is something Jesus had already told them and only *they* knew and not the women (Mk. 14:28). The mention of *Peter's* name is significant because if anyone had gone through an upheaval and disillusionment than it was he. Yet, in the midst of this upheaval and disillusionment the resurrected Christ would meet *him*. And when he did, Peter too would receive the strength and hope to *continue* the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven. When the resurrected Lord meets *us* in the midst of the upheavals and disillusionments of life, *we* have strength and hope to continue the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven. While he probably will not do so through the appearance of an angel, he does so in so many and various *ways*, such as the preaching of the Word of God, the reading of the Word of God, the encouragement of brothers and sisters traveling the same journey as we. **Reflect:** *How has the risen Christ met you in the upheavals and disillusionments of life? How has this given you strength and hope to continue the journey to the coming kingdom of heaven?*

Surrey Covenant Reformed Church

