

## “The Soul in Everyday Stuff: Stones”

Matthew 28:1-10

Stones are the most common things in our world, yet we have used them for every extreme of human nature. In ancient times, they were stacked high to build protective walls or chipped away to create the first tools of progress. But stones were also our first weapons.

In the story of Easter, we see a stone used as the ultimate tool of suppression. In **Matthew 27:62-66**, the religious leaders and Pilate use a stone to try and "secure" the status quo. They were afraid of the "impostor's" promise to rise, so they used the heaviest thing they could find to make sure the "last deception" wouldn't happen. For them, that stone was an act of human cruelty and control - a physical weight meant to hold down the Light of the World. Let's listen to the scripture:

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup> and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup> Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, "You have a guard <sup>[u]</sup> of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." <sup>[v]</sup> <sup>66</sup> So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

### **But a stone of cruelty cannot withstand the weight of God's healing love.**

As the first day of the week dawned, the two Marys walked toward that same tomb. They weren't expecting a miracle; they were likely wondering, "*Who will roll away the stone for us?*" Then, the earth shuddered. In **Matthew 28:2**, we are told a great earthquake struck as an angel descended and—in a beautiful act of divine defiance—rolled back the stone and *sat on it*. The very object meant to be a barrier became a bench for a messenger of God.

The angel's message was simple: "*He is not here.*"

Let's listen to the story of the first Easter according to Matthew 28:1-10

<https://youtu.be/GOASlpQcZ6s?list=TLPQMzAwMzlwMja9LjGa27PslA>

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, "Do

not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he<sup>[a]</sup> lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead,<sup>[b]</sup> and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." <sup>8</sup> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The stone was rolled away not so Jesus could get out—He was already gone—but so that we could see in. The death of Jesus was transformed into a power of love that propelled his followers to continue his work. The stone that was intended to block the flow of love became the monument of a new movement.

Pilate had an "airtight" plan: crucify the man, bury the body, seal the stone, and guard the site. Our human plans are often like that. We try to seal away our mistakes, our grief, or our enemies once and for all. But the resurrection of Jesus rolls away the stones of our fear and control. It takes the "stumbling blocks" of our world—war, violence, greed, and oppression—and transforms them into stepping stones toward hope.

Easter does not deny the cold, hard reality of the stone. It simply shows us that God has a way of moving what we thought was permanent.

### **The Closing: A Reflection on a Pebble**

I invite you this week to look at the small pebble you received today. Hold it in your hand. Feel its weight, its rough edges, and its coolness.

In the hands of the world, a stone like this can be a weapon. It can be a barrier. It can be a weight that keeps us tethered to our past.

But in the light of the Resurrection, this pebble is something else. It is a piece of the monument of New Life. It is a reminder that there is no "seal" the world can place on your life—no fear, no grief, no failure—that God cannot roll away.

Carry this pebble in your pocket this week. When you feel the "weight" of the world, reach in and touch it. Let it remind you that God takes our stumbling blocks and transforms them into tools for love. The stone is rolled away. Love is on the move.