

God's wonderful surprise

The Resurrection, from Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20

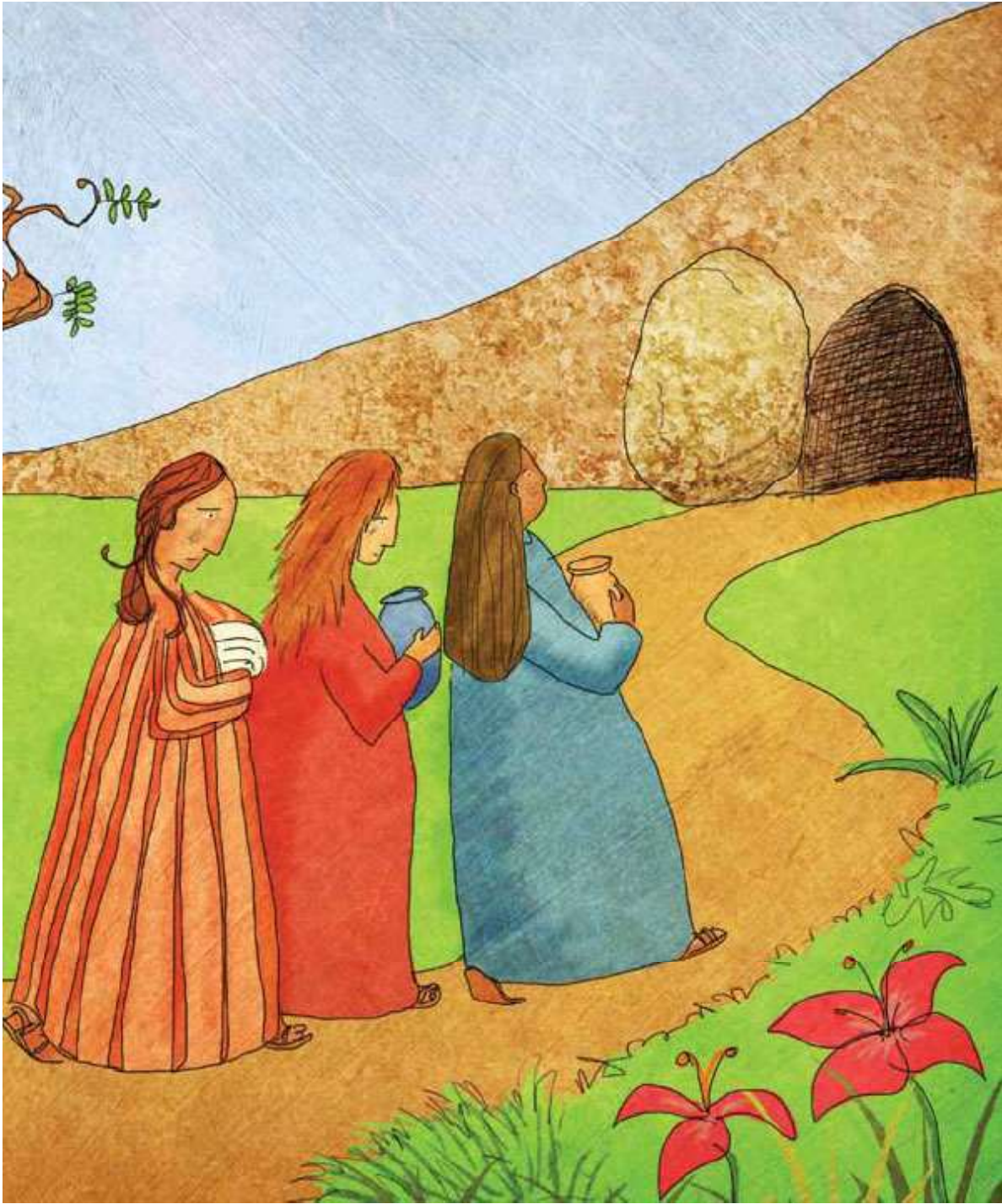
JESUS' FRIENDS WERE SAD. They would never see their best friend again. How could this happen? Wasn't Jesus the Rescuer? The King God had promised? It wasn't supposed to end like this.

Yes, but whoever said anything about the end?

Just before sunrise, on the third day, God sent an earthquake—and an angel from heaven. When the guards saw the angel, they fell down with fright. The angel rolled the huge stone away, sat on top of it, and waited.

At the first glimmer of dawn, Mary Magdalene and other women headed to the tomb to wash Jesus' body. The early morning sun slanted through the ancient olive trees, drops of dew glittering on leaves and grasses—little tears everywhere. The friends walked quietly along the hilly path, through the olive groves, until they reached the tomb. And immediately noticed something odd—it was wide open.

They peered through the opening into the dark tomb. But wait. Jesus' body was gone!



And something else: a shining man was there, with clothes made from lightning.

“Don’t be scared,” the angel said.

But (they couldn’t help it) they screamed anyway.

The angel asked them, “What are you doing here? This is a tomb and tombs are for dead people.”

The women couldn't speak.

“Jesus isn't dead anymore!” he said. “He's alive again!”

And their hearts leapt. And then the angel laughed with such gladness that they felt, for a moment, as if they had woken from a nightmare.





The other women rushed home, but Mary stayed behind. How could it be true? Jesus was definitely dead—how could he be alive? Just then Mary heard someone else in the garden. *Perhaps it's the gardener*, she thought. *He'll know where Jesus' body is.*

“I don't know where Jesus is!” Mary said urgently. “I can't find him.”
But it was all right. Jesus knew where she was. And he had found her.
“Mary!”

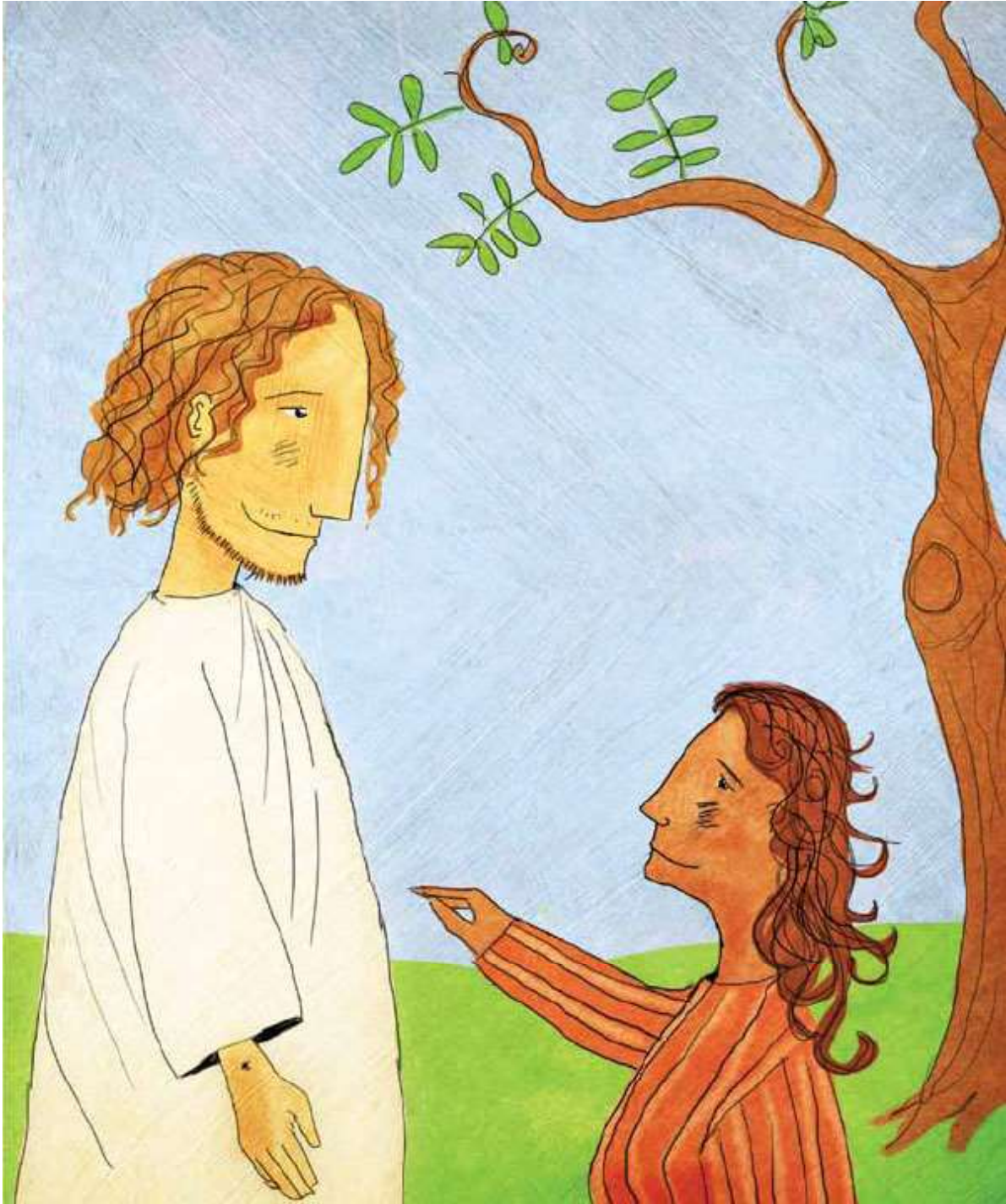
Only one person said her name like that. She could hear her heart thumping. She turned around. She could just make out a figure. She shaded her eyes to see...and thought she was dreaming.

But she wasn't dreaming. She was seeing.
“Jesus!”

Mary fell to the ground. Sudden tears filled her eyes and great sobs shook her whole body, and all she wanted in that moment was to cling to Jesus

and never let him go.

“You’ll be able to hold on to me later, Mary,” Jesus said gently, “and always be close to me. But now, go and tell the others that I’m alive!”





Mary ran and ran, all the way to the city. She had never run so fast or so far in all her life. She felt she could have run forever. She didn't even feel like her feet touched the ground. The sun seemed to be dancing and gleaming and bounding across the sky, racing with her and shining brighter than she could ever remember in the clear, fresh air.

And it seemed to her that morning, as she ran, almost as if the whole world had been made anew, almost as if the whole world was singing for joy—the trees, tiny sounds in the grass, the birds...her heart.



Was God really making everything sad come untrue? Was he making even death come untrue?

She couldn't wait to tell Jesus' friends. "They won't believe it!" she laughed.

She was right, of course.