

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Easter Weekend – April 3-4, 2021
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Mark 16:1-8a

The women flee the empty tomb in fear. Jesus is not there. But God doesn't leave us in our fear. There are promises to live by. Jesus told them He would see them in Galilee. And He specifically invited Peter to restore the relationship. At times we walk in fear and this – honestly – is part of walking in faith with our Lord who goes ahead.

Mark 16:1-8 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

What? That's it? That's the end of the whole life and story of Jesus Christ? He isn't in the tomb. He's not there. Supposedly Jesus is ahead of them in Galilee yet the women flee in fear without saying anything to anyone. Really?

Does that feel like a cliff hanger to you? It's like when the movie credits start to roll there are multiple loose ends that could be resolved any number of ways. Remember that feeling? When we have to wait maybe a year or more before the sequel comes out?

Mark's ending of the Easter story seems only too fitting for this pandemic. Just when you think this crazy, disrupted year might be coming to an end, we wanted to hear something hopeful on Easter! Something concrete. Maybe like Jesus didn't really die. That would be helpful. This is all there is? Nobody sees Jesus alive except a strange man inside the tomb and Jesus' disciples run away, eyes wide with terror.

We humans have such a need for order. We want satisfying movie endings and closure in relationships. The boxes in the mail should arrive taped shut, not squished out of shape and half open. We don't do well with the unknown. It makes us feel unsettled. Scared even. Yes, we can get alarmed.

That's what we were feeling last Easter. Our country went lock-down. Tombs shut kind of lock down. Stay home. It almost made us not want to breathe. We didn't know what we know

now. Last Easter on April 11, the United States had 20,000 deaths. We heard by the time it was over we'd all know someone or multiple people who had died from Covid 19. We all wondered who it would be. Would it be one of my loved ones? No, please God, not one of my loved ones. Then along about December or January, it seemed we all knew a friend or a relative or a friend of a friend of a friend who had gotten the Coronavirus and perhaps even died.

Just like we have to take care of all the details after a loved one dies, on that Easter morning the women were only taking care of their dead. When someone dies there are tasks one simply has to do. Get the death certificates. Cancel the insurance. Mary, Mary and Salome were going to anoint Jesus' body for burial. Anoint it with spices to take away the stench. They were taking care of Jesus' body in order to have closure.

We can hardly imagine their surprise when the huge rock formed tomb is already open! Furthermore there is a man inside who tells them the most astonishing thing. Jesus is raised, He is alive, not dead! So much for closure!

Jesus is alive? What does that mean? Dead in every single circumstance those women had ever known meant 'dead.' Flowers died. Sheep died. The wheat and corn died. People died ... and then stayed dead.

The statement that Jesus was alive naturally filled them with fright. Alive? Not their Jesus! Not their beloved rabbi. In moments of true terror, hearts race, and palms get sweaty. Breath gets sucked in and our minds close to new information like a lid screwed on. Panic like this can feel like a tomb.

So they ran. They ran and ran and ran afraid of all they had seen and heard.

Yet, you and I know the truth! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Had they even heard the young man's words? "Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

Fear isn't the end of the story. No. Jesus had put out there this open-ended promise. He would meet them in Galilee! They would see Him. Mary, Mary, Salome, Andrew, James, John, even Peter if he would come. Jesus would meet all of them. It was a promise.

It was a fascinating invitation. Because if you remember, Peter, the one Christ was to build the church upon, had denied being a disciple or even knowing the Lord just a couple of days ago. While warming himself by the fire in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter rejected the truth. "I'm not one of His disciples. No, I don't know that man!"

The young man said, "Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." God's promises of faith were ready to be received.

Jesus would meet them in person. Furthermore, Jesus wanted to see all of them, even Peter. There would be forgiveness, restored relationships and new life! It would be closure and no loose ends.

The promises of faith are there for us as well! In the midst of our very human anxieties and distress, the Risen Christ is here. Death doesn't hold His body or spirit anymore! The Lord goes ahead of us and is willing to meet us no matter the circumstances and even if we may have run away or denied Him not once but many times. We can walk in faith, not fear.

Because Christ is Risen!

God is not done with us yet. The Holy Spirit is not done with us yet. Christ is not done with us yet. Just as daffodils survive the winter and surprise us with their blooms, God transforms our failures into forgiveness, our guilt into grace, our pain into peace, our loneliness into love, and our deaths into new life.

Mary, Mary and Salome ran and ran from something they had never experienced before. But you and I know the ending. Christ really is alive! It's true and we'll stake our very lives on that truth. Therefore on this Easter, let us run and run and run with everything in us towards God who gives us new life because of His own death.

We have a risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed. Amen!