

Timothy M. Crummitt

Resurrection of Our Lord - Year B

57th Week of the Pandemic - First Outside Service

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

Mark 16:1-8

04/04/2021

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

1When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint [Jesus' body]. 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.

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Fear and Trembling!

Good morning! Today is the big one... Easter Sunday. When you combine it with Christmas Eve it's like the Preachers' World Cup. A two game series to find out how good you are. Or, at least that's how it feels for those of us in the pulpit this morning. And yet, I doubt that any of you can recall what I have said in the past sermons I have given on Easter. In fact, as we found out on Monday, besides one specific instance where Pastor Jean Bozeman wrapped her head like Mary Magdalene, none of us could recall a specific Easter sermon from our pasts. (I bet if I fall off this darn stand you'll remember THIS sermon!) So... what about this day makes it so hard, or so unlikely, that the words proclaimed in sermons across the world will likely be forgotten?

Let's look at the story for an answer. Today we read the resurrection story in the Gospel of Mark, and I think we can all agree that it's a unique take on an already unique story. Lamar Williamson Jr. captures the uniqueness of the story in his introduction to this section in his commentary, writing; *"When is an ending not an ending? When a dead man rises from the tomb— and when a Gospel ends in the middle of a sentence."*¹ He's right. It's generally agreed by scholars that the original Gospel of Mark ended with what we have here today. It's abrupt, and sudden. In fact, it's like it isn't an ending at all. Apparently early Christians

¹Williamson, Lamar Jr. *Mark: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009. p. 283.

agreed, and decided to give the Gospel another chapter to wrap things up, but you won't find this longer ending in earlier manuscripts.²

But I happen to love the empty tomb story that we find here in Mark. I can empathize with the women who respond with terror and amazement, I would too! They get a lot of flack for how they respond, but let's put ourselves in their shoes. We have heard this story so often the ending no longer surprises us. We need to remember the rollercoaster of events that they have just gone through. Less than a week ago the man they have been following for almost a year led them into Jerusalem for the most important Jewish festival: Passover. Over the past few months they had seen this man do things they never thought possible, from healings to miracles, time and time again Jesus had changed what they thought could happen. They had begun to think that maybe this man was the Messiah! The one who would restore Israel, who would lead them away from the tyranny of Roman occupation.

In fact, the whole city greeted him like a king just a few days ago! The next day he stormed the Temple and overturned the tables, challenging the system and powers-that-be! But then the most horrible thing happened and he was arrested. In fact, he was betrayed by one of their friends! The religious leaders convinced the Roman governor Pilate and the crowds to demand that Jesus be killed. So the women watched in agony as he was beaten, mocked, and then paraded through town. Then the authorities did the unthinkable... they didn't just kill Jesus, they crucified him! The women watched as he died, mocked continually by the crowds. After he was dead his body was laid in a tomb, and it wasn't until this morning that they were

² Keck, Leander E. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. Volume 7. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2015. p. 552.

able to come and finish the burial preparation for Jesus, taking spices that weighed around 100 lbs., they head to the tomb to finish this last mark of respect for a man they had placed so much hope in.

But as they approached the tomb they realized that they hadn't even thought about what to do about the stone that was in the way! They were so distracted that they must not have even thought of it! As they get closer they notice that the stone is already rolled away... Has someone come to do the same job they have come to do? Or worse, has someone stolen the body and desecrated his corpse?! They peek inside and what do they find? A man who is most likely an angel who tells them that Jesus has come back from the dead and is waiting on the disciples in Galilee! What is going on?!

Like I said, you might be just as terrified too. I mean they have just seen what was most likely an angel, which in every single biblical account has the human respond with absolute fear and trembling. A glimpse of something from the divine tended to scare the average human being.

It's an amazing story. A story unlike anything else. Truly this man was the Son of God, truly this man was something more! The Messiah! All that talk of salvation was on such a larger scale than they had thought! Jesus wasn't talking about just saving Israel, God was doing something incredible, defeating death once and for all!

So, why don't we remember Easter sermons? I think it's because they're all just signs pointing to a story that's so much bigger. They're like billboard signs on the way to Disney World. Our words aren't really that important, when was the last time you remembered the text on a billboard? You don't remember what we say, only where we point... towards an empty tomb, to a risen Christ, and the salvation of the whole world! Amen.