

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Resurrection of Our Lord - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

Mark 16:1-8

03/31/2024

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 Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Resurrection of Our Lord

Good morning! Christ is Risen! We say that every Easter season, but have you ever thought about how genuinely amazing and joyous that statement truly is?! Three days ago we gathered for the Good Friday service where we read the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He was laid in a tomb, defeated, broken... dead. Then! Three days later everything has changed! We gather today because this event has changed the world!

But have you ever wondered about how the story was told? Take a listen again to those final verses: *“So 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.”* If you turn your Bible to the Gospel of Mark you will see that the story continues for another chapter, but all scholars agree that this was an addition that was included after the earliest copies of the Gospel. The original ended right here, with the first witnesses to the tomb fleeing in fear. One scholar translates the verse this way: *“And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and bewilderment took hold of them. And they said nothing to anyone. For they were afraid.”*¹ This translation really captures the absolute terror that holds these first witnesses.

Which makes sense, especially when you consider the whirlwind of events as a whole. Just a week ago Jesus entered Jerusalem to shouts of joy and much fanfare.

¹ Donahue, John R., and Daniel J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2002. p. 457.

You had been journeying with him for months, witnessing miracle after miracle, healing after healing, and lesson after lesson. You KNEW he would change the world, and as he rode into the Holy City on the back of a colt your Messiah had finally come to make it happen. Expectations were high, only for everything to change just a few short days ago when he was arrested, paraded around like a common criminal, and beaten to within an inch of his life. Then he underwent a state execution on a cross, a death so gruesome and brutal that it was taboo to even discuss it. So, grief stricken and confused, the women approach the tomb after the Sabbath so they may finish the appropriate burial tasks and put this all behind them...

But the tomb was open! Had someone desecrated the burial ground? And upon entering they are met with a messenger of God, most likely an angel, which is a whole thing just in and of itself! *“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,”* you are told. WHAT?!

Now, at this point in Judaism the theological concept of resurrection was spreading, but was still not completely accepted. The one key difference is that for those who did believe in resurrection all thought that this was a corporate/communal resurrection. They thought that ALL Jewish believers would be resurrected, but this wouldn't happen until the end of time. It would happen all at once, and not until far far later. So Jesus' individual resurrection was something new and mind-boggling.

And yet... this is what happened. Once again God has changed the rules of the game. You have to applaud those faithful women who approached the tomb that morning. Who knew what might be in store for a follower of Jesus? But they refused

to let their fear rule their hearts, and so they approached determined to see him laid to rest with respect. In so doing, they became the very first witnesses to the Easter miracle. What an honor!

Which brings us back to my earlier question. Why does the Gospel of Mark end with fear and trembling? Well, you could fill whole libraries with the thoughts of people regarding this very question, but here's my take:

The Gospel writer is challenging us to carry the message onward and outward. The story ends in a way that really isn't an ending at all, because WE are being called to share this wonderful news! That is why we gather today! To hear the story again and remind ourselves of our mission! It's why in a few minutes we'll pour water on Alice's head, and remember that this event has changed everything. God died and came back from the dead! And because of that sacrifice there is unlimited hope for what tomorrow might bring! This is the Good News of Jesus Christ. Death has been defeated, and in his resurrection we are given a glimpse of the glory that awaits us all, a mere glimmer of the beauty that awaits God's restoration of the world. So, don't be afraid to share this wonderful message. Christ is Risen! Alleluia, Amen.