

Sermon for April 4, 2021
Easter Sunday
Communion Sunday

Naomi Wadler was only 11 when she spoke at the “March for our Lives” student let rally against gun violence in Washington D.C. in 2018. By all accounts, however, she seemed much older. “I am here today,” she said, “to acknowledge and represent the African American girls whose stories don’t make the front page of every national newspaper, whose stories don’t lead the evening news. I represent the African American women who are victims of gun violence, who are simply statistics instead of vibrant, beautiful girls that fill a potential. She then urged everyone to join her in telling stories that aren’t told.

Naomi’s eloquent entreaty, inviting our participation in writing this story, resonates deeply as we absorb the news of the mass shooting at a supermarket in Colorado and calls to mind another unfinished story: Mark’s odd Easter narrative. As Mark’s story opens, three women make their way to the tomb - - the only followers who remained faithful to the end. They come with spices, to render him one last act of loving service and devotion. But when they arrive at the tomb, they find the large stone rolled away and there they meet a young man dressed in a white robe who bears astonishing news: “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. But 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.”

And how do they respond to this announcement? Mark tells us: “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.” Period. The end! Is that any way to end a Gospel? The question has been debated endlessly, but most scholars generally agree Mark’s Gospel did really end at 16: 8, and that what follows is an intentional unfinished story that will not let us go. It works powerfully on us, drawing us in to think about what happened next and perhaps even to be part of what unfolds - - to finish the story.

As we think about this possibility, it is important to look carefully to the words of the young man at the tomb: “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised....He is going ahead of you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.” So where will Jesus meet them, and us? Galilee is the everyday world of Jesus’ disciples - - the place where they lived and worked, along with others; some wealthy and elite, but far more destitute. Some were immigrants or refugees. Galilee is the place where we will encounter the crucified and risen Christ who goes before us into our own everyday worlds. It is there that we work out the ending to Mark’s story. Galilee is a place where the crucified of the earth live their everyday lives, along with their crucified. It is a place of fear and violence. The shock of Easter is that it is also the place where the crucified Christ, raised from the dead, goes before us. This is indescribably good news because it means that the hate, fear and violence of our world does not have the last word. The resurrected Christ, who goes before us, bears witness to God who seeks to bring resurrection, new creation, out of our death-trending realities. This news inspires hope, but also action. The good news of resurrection empowers, by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, to live into a story as it continues to unfold - - to finish the story in our everyday lives.

But let me be clear. I do not think children should be required to bear adult burdens, but in fact they do. And the great feast of Easter when we are invited to partake of bread and cup representing the body and blood of Christ, whereby we are shaped from within, let us attune our

ears to the voices of children, of Easter youth, directing us to places most in need of resurrection and new life. Let us each imagine one act of solidarity we could take in the midst of our own daily lives that might break down the wall of injustice so that God's justice might roll down on earth like a mighty flowing stream.

Let us begin this again, as we break bread and lift the cup together on this Easter Day...come join me...