

Grace Lutheran Church, Uniondale, New York
Lutheran Church of the Epiphany ~ Iglesia Luterana de la Epifanía
Hempstead, New York
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Resurrection of Our Lord B – April 4, 2021

Acts 10:34-43, Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8

*Christ is risen, Alleluia! C: **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

The two Mary's and Salome went to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' dead body. But they found that his body wasn't there and a man – not Jesus – sitting there and telling 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. (Mark 16:6-8)

Is that really the end, we ask ourselves? It can't be! And those of you who have your Bibles out, will say, no, there's something called “the shorter ending of Mark” that comes after this passage, and then another whole section: verses 9 through 20, called “the longer ending of Mark.” And these endings talk about how the disciples met Jesus after his resurrection, and what they did, and how the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection began.

But when you read those passages, even without the footnote that says that the portions after verse 8 are marked as “doubtful,” they sound like editorial comments, not like primary gospel material. So it appears that this abrupt ending is the authentic conclusion of Mark's Gospel. It gives us, in the words of Lutheran scholar Don Juel, the presence of both promise and disappointment: the promise that the disciples would see Jesus again in Galilee and disappointment that they've found an empty tomb.

(<https://www.workingpreacher.org> Sermon Brainwave, April 4, 2021)

The message that the women were to deliver to Peter and the other disciples about Galilee would bring them full circle, since it was in Galilee that Jesus

met and called them, and now he promised that he'd meet them there again. But what were they to do? What were they to say about his – resurrection?

This was a new reality. They'd just started getting used to the reality of Jesus' death and now here was an even newer reality. Or, as we have come to call changed circumstances, a “new normal.”

A year ago, we were hoping for, and probably expecting a changed circumstance to our lives for a short time – maybe a few months? And it's been a little over a year, and we're hearing that maybe in the summer of this year, we'll have another “new normal.” We can identify with the disciples' confusion and fear. Fear about what it means to declare that someone is back from the dead. Fear about what it means to step into the role of discipleship, dealing with so much human suffering and death.

For three years, they had hoped in the new teaching that Jesus shared with them, they had heard the questions and seen the works of wonder that addressed people's needs, and then their lives were disrupted.

Are we fearful about what will happen? Of course, we have the benefit of the hindsight of more than 2000 years of proclamation of Jesus' resurrection and ascension to rely on in understanding the impact of Jesus' resurrection, but we most likely have some anxiety (if not outright fear) about how this whole pandemic thing finally is going to unfold.

Are we not afraid of the disruption in our lives because we rely on Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to keep and protect us – the whole world – from the effects of the pandemic? That's a great source of comfort and security. Even though there are terrible effects from the pandemic -- 2,844,807 people have died world-wide as of this morning, recent developments give us hope for the future.

So what do we make of that spiritual presence in our lives? How do we address God at work in our world today? How do we carry out the role of disciple that Peter preached about in the reading we heard from Acts and that Paul wrote about in his letter to the Corinthians, a portion of which we also heard?

How will we proclaim the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of salvation from our sin? How will we serve the people who are in need in our communities and throughout the world?

If we accept the millennia of testimony about Jesus' resurrection, then we need to find ways to make the proclamation our own: in conversation, in emails, tweets and DMs and Tik Tok videos and Instagram messages, and YouTube recordings all on social media; in podcasts, in letters, prose or poetry, if we are writers; in song, if we are musicians. In any and every way we are able.

Like the first disciples, everyone has our own experience of the resurrection and our own encounter with the risen Jesus Christ. That diversity is fine – it's God's doing; God's creation. That's what Peter is preaching about. And, once we've received the Gospel and been touched by it, then we have to pass it on again, as often and to as many people as we're able, as Paul instructed.

Because this is the message that our disrupted world needs to hear in order not be afraid; in order to be committed to safe behavior to keep the spread of COVID as limited as possible – even at this late date. This is part of the “new normal” for 21st Century disciples of Christ.

Because this is the message that our disrupted world needs to hear in order for us to be committed to restructuring our society so that it is a place of equity in life for both citizens and non-citizens: in work, in housing; in health; in justice. This is also part of the “new normal” for 21st Century disciples of Christ.

Because this is the message that our disrupted world needs to hear in order to be committed to treating the created world with care, restoration and protection. This is also part of the “new normal” for 21st Century disciples of Christ.

We know that, even though the three women were terrified and amazed, even though they fled that early Sunday morning, eventually they said something to someone, because we are here today. The link to that morning may be long and circuitous, but it is undeniable. And it is life-giving.

So how will you react to the good news that Jesus Christ is risen?

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. *C: Amen!*