

## **Easter Sunday - Mark 16:1-8**

Christ is Risen! He is risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Easter Sunday is one day in the church year that brings with it great memories. I have great memories of Easter breakfasts at several churches.

My mother would load up plastic eggs with chocolate and give each of her grandchildren a chance to look around the property for these surprises.

I served the parish of All Saints Lutheran in Newcombville, Nova Scotia. When building the church they built it on the shoreline of Wile Lake and was surrounded by several trees. It made for a great place for the Sunday School to have a scavenger hunt for eggs. They could be hid behind roots and stumps and under leaves. The kids had a blast. God's love shone brightly for all of us as we celebrated those Easter mornings and continues to shine brightly for many who are celebrating.

The Resurrection story is complicated but so simple depending on which gospel you listen to. Today we hear Mark's Easter sermon and it goes something like this: "Christ is risen! And they said nothing to anybody because they were afraid."

There is no encounter with the resurrected Jesus at the end of Mark's Gospel. Instead there is a mysterious messenger who issues a promise and a command, plus an empty tomb, and a group of women who flee in terror, too frightened to speak.

Each of the other Gospels share at least two pieces of evidence as proof that Jesus has risen from the dead: witnesses to the empty tomb and appearances of the risen Christ to multiple followers.

In Mark the tomb is empty (apart from the messenger), but nobody gets to see Jesus or touch the nail holes in his hands. There is no great commission like in Matthew, no recounting of the Hebrew Scriptures or a meal shared with travellers to Emmaeus like in Luke, and no intimate conversation with Mary in the garden nor sudden arrival of the risen Christ behind locked door as is John.

Mark's good news requires no resurrection proofs based on encounters between Jesus and his disciples. Instead there is a promise: He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told him."

Each of us comes to the mystery of the Resurrection from different perspectives. For some of us, belief in the truth of Easter is immediate and easy. For others of us, it takes time. However we come to the mystery of God's defeat of the powers of sin and death in the resurrection of Jesus, the risen Christ will find a way to make himself known to us that we might believe and then go forth to tell the world, "He is risen!"

For some of you, you hear the idea of a crucified Jew, entombed for three days, and you may say, "Sure, I've believed in the truth of resurrection since I was a child."

Others of you may see all these flowers and hear the joyful Easter music or listen to my sermon and in the end say, "I'm just not sure. I don't really believe that I believe."

Some of you may come to this joyful morning full of joy and happiness. Easter Sunday is your favorite Sunday of the church year. You have been rehearsing the music, or looking forward with great anticipation to this Sunday for a long time.

Others of you may be in gloom rather than in light. You have just lost someone whom you love. You may find all this joy and triumphant gladness to be somewhat oppressive.

It took Mary Magdalene a while to believe in the Resurrection. It was only when Christ called her name that she was able to announce to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." It took the other disciples longer to believe what they had seen with their own eyes.

Where are you in this story of the first Easter? For some of you, it's quite enough for you to come to church, see the flowers and sing the songs, and you steadfastly, firmly believe, "He is risen!"

Others of you come to church, see the flowers, sing the songs, hear the sermon (!) but come away muttering, "I just can't say for sure. I just don't know what to believe."

Still others of you see all the evidence, hear the complete testimony, and scripture's rationale for believing but you are waiting. For you, resurrection faith is not so much intellectual assent as it is waiting for your name to be called: "Mary," or "John," or "Lea."

How have you come here this Easter morning? What path has brought you here?

It doesn't matter how you have come here. What's important is the promise implied behind today's Easter gospel: the risen Christ is not here, not entombed in a dead, ancient past. He is risen! He's on the move! Moving toward you, eager for you to

see and, in seeing, to believe, wanting to give you what you need in order to believe, calling your very own name.

In his resurrection, who did Christ appear to? His own disciples. To some, the risen Christ called their names. To others, he simply stood before them. He seems determined to connect, intent on giving them whatever they need to believe that his love and life are triumphant, and not only a triumph for him, but for them as well.

I don't care how you come to Easter. Christ's promise is that you won't go away the same. You, even amid your questions, doubts, or reservations—Christ will give you the faith to be able to say to the world, in one way or another, "I have seen the Lord!" God is making you new!

Alleluia Christ is risen!