

Mark 16:1-8 (again, with a debt to Dr. M. Eugene Boring in his commentary on Mark, published by Westminster John Knox Press)

The Resurrection

(reading from the overhead...)

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Hey, just a minute!

What is going on here?

"Trembling and bewildered, they said nothing because they were afraid"?

What kind of ending is that?

How about ***Immediately*** the women ran to tell the disciples and Peter the good news. Then they all hurried to Galilee and saw Jesus. When they saw him, they fell at his feet and worshipped him. He breathed on them and had breakfast with them and gave them the Holy Spirit....

Wouldn't that be more "gospelly"?

The women don't tell anyone the greatest news in the history of the world?

Does "fear" have the last word, even after the resurrection?

Some people have said that the ending got lost and have tried to be helpful by writing one. That's why we have verses 9-20 in brackets. If you read those verses you will know why there are small pockets of the Christian church called "snake handlers". But the all of the oldest and most accurate manuscripts stop at verse 8. I think if we hang in there with Mark something very cool happens. We'll see it in a few moments...

First though, a few features of this story....

The Sabbath ends at sundown. At sundown the women go to buy spices so that they might anoint Jesus' body. Very early in the morning when it is still dark they go to the tomb. They can't find Jesus, there is a misunderstanding and it seems that Jesus is on a mission somewhere else.

There are echoes of an earlier story in Mark ... listen...

Chapter 1 ³⁵*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus arose, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* ³⁶*Simon and his companions went to look for him,* ³⁷*and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

³⁸*Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."* ³⁹*So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

These two stories of echo back and forth against each other in this gospel. The one foreshadows, the other harkens back. Together, could it be that following Jesus is often just like that?

As the women walk, they ask, "who will roll the stone away?"

They had seen it, a great big round stone rolled into a groove in front of the tomb. It was very heavy.

It is not a question that is meant to embarrass the men who hear this story. “Where are the guys when you need them anyway?” Their question is really for us. Who can unseal a tomb? Who can break the power of death?

Can anyone?

When he came up out of the water after his baptism, Jesus looked up and saw the heavens being torn by the unseen hand of God.

The temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom by an invisible hand as Jesus breathed his last and died on the cross.

Both times it was the hand of God reaching down into our world, and now again. No human hand rolled the stone away. No human brought Jesus out of the grave. God reached down into our time, our world, our story and raised Jesus to life again.

The women look up and see that the stone **has been rolled away**. The verb used here makes it clear that this is action that has happened in the past and it affects the present. It’s like when we are on the phone to our relatives in a tropical place, like maybe Ontario, and we say, “All the snow has melted”. It happened two days ago, but it affects today and all the tomorrows ahead of us.

God has taken away the barrier of death and sin. It changes our past, present and all of our tomorrows.

The women see an angel sitting on the right side. (which is always a place of honour) (cf. Boring)

“Don’t be alarmed”, he said, “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One”, he has been raised, he is not here”.

Jesus is always, “the Crucified One”. Just as we sang earlier this morning, “You’re the Lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain...” and as the team sang, “we will know Jesus by the mark of his nail scarred hands”. Jesus, even the risen Jesus, is always the lamb who was slain. He holds the world and he holds you and me in his nail scarred hands. He is our wounded healer, he knows what it is to suffer, even as he suffered for us.

He is not here, the angel said. He is not in the tomb, but he has gone ahead to Galilee. He is **out in the world!**

Suppose you are sitting around late one night in your basement. Your friend is telling a long, scary story. It’s the story of a young basketball player who always wanted a special pair of shoes. He saved his money for months and finally when he had enough, he went and bought them. He went straight to the basketball court down the street, but a gang came along and killed him for his shoes. Now, your friend says, his ghost goes from house to house, knocking on doors asking for his shoes.

And in the quiet as you sit looking at each other, you hear from upstairs, ‘knock, knock, knock’.

What has just happened is that the ghost has gotten out of the story and into your world. Your question is not, “am I afraid, or is it true?”, but “what do I do now?”

“Jesus”, says the angel, “is not here”. He is not in the grave, he is not in a book, he is not confined to a church building. He is out there, on the move **in our world.**

“In fact he is going ahead of you to Galilee. He wants you to tell his disciples and Peter to meet him there”.

The name Galilee literally means ‘circle’.

And it is much more than a place name. It’s like when an athlete says, “I’m going to **the show**”, he means “I am now in the big leagues”. A person who has been convicted might say, “I’m going to **the big house**”, meaning “jail”. Or, if you say on Sunday night, “back to **the salt mines**” tomorrow, you mean, “work”. (I hope your work never feels like the salt mines)

“Galilee” in this gospel means ministry. Galilee is the first nine chapters of calling, teaching, healing, feeding the hungry and setting people free from spiritual darkness. (cf Boring)

“Go to “Galilee”, there you will see him.” Follow him into ministry, there you will meet him.

The whole story goes in a circle, back to the beginning.

And then, **in this story**, they don’t go and they don’t tell.

Hmmmm.

In his commentary on Mark Eugene Boring says this:

If we have read this gospel, we have been with Jesus in every scene. And we have seen everyone leave Jesus.

His family who thought he was out of his mind.

The religious leaders who thought he was blasphemous...

....and the crowds too.

Every last one of the disciples that he has personally called to follow him have left him. The last one fled naked and ran away. Within the story, the women are the last hope that **anyone** will continue as a faithful follower. They have seen the empty tomb and been commissioned by an angel.

But now they too run away, afraid, and say nothing to anyone. The story that began with a great announcement ends with a whimper and trails off in the middle of a sentence, even after the resurrection. Now, **we** stand at the edge of a story that is not finished and everyone else has failed and left.

Can this be the end?

And then we realize that this story is not about **other** people, it is about us.

So I ask you three questions:

The first question is personal.....

“If **everyone** else walks away from Jesus, will I still follow?”

Will I step in and take the good news that Jesus the Crucified One is alive?

I think this turns out to be an awesome story to read before profession of faith. It asks a question that still needs to be asked of young people who profess their faith in other countries:

If my friends and my family should quit following Jesus would I stay with him?

If the leadership in my church would abandon Jesus would I stay with him?

If following Jesus would mean trouble and famine and hardship and nakedness and persecution and sword, like it did for the apostle Paul, would I still follow?

The **second** question is for all of us together:

Will **we** follow Jesus as he goes ahead of us into “Galilee”? He says that we will meet him if we follow him as his disciples, learning from his teaching, sharing with those in need, bringing healing to the sick, visiting the lonely, feeding the hungry and setting everyone free that lives in spiritual darkness, showing and telling that Jesus is alive.

Jesus is calling us to follow him into ministry. He will meet us there. We know what that is like. We make a visit, we share a Bible study, we tell one more person about him, and we are left with the undeniable sense that Jesus has been with us, has kept his promise and met us there.

We meet him in “Galilee”. Where is that? Well, it is anywhere that we follow Jesus into service.

Anyone in St. Albert could tell you that “Galilee” has to be in Grandin. **(note to on-line readers... St. Albert is divided up into neighbourhoods by alphabet. It just so happens that our church is located in “Grandin” which is where “Galilee” the “place of ministry” would be too.)**

Which is perfect. Maybe this story is especially for our congregation!

Which calls us to follow Jesus Christ into service in our community.

Third: Remember that Mark begins: “The **beginning** of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. Maybe all of Mark really is only the beginning. And that everyone who picks up this book and reads it and follows Jesus comes to have a place in the story. What kind of story will be written as we follow Jesus here? Whatever story we write, it must begin with Mark’s favourite word: You know it. “**Immediately**”. Immediately, because there is no time to waste. People are starving for the grace of Jesus, right here around us. Immediately, because the loneliness of the shut-in tears at the heart of Jesus. Immediately, because there are people still stuck in slavery to dark spiritual forces. We sometimes act as if demons and evil spirits are so “AD 30”. But if we pay attention and listen to people and see people we know that there are people longing to be set free by the grace and power of Jesus. Immediately because there are still dying of hunger in this broken world of plenty.

Let’s get going to “Galilee”. Jesus will meet us there.

May the Lord be gracious to you,

May the Lord be gracious to me,

And all God’s people said, Amen.