

The Resurrection of the Lord

April 12, 2009

Mark 16:1-8

He Comes To Us!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Oh those silly women! Don't they know any better? As we hear the Gospel according to St. Mark this morning we believe that we could have done better. That we would have remembered our Lord's words about rising from the tomb, that the temple of His body would rise from the grave. But would we really? If we were in the same circumstances as these women, our master having just been executed several days before, do you really think you would have been more prepared than these women? Probably not.

So they take their sacks of spices and bottles of perfume to anoint the body properly for burial, for they didn't have the time to do it properly on Friday. They journey to the tomb and they remember the stone. That stone to keep grave robbers out in order that no one would be able to steal the body and confirm Jesus testimony about Himself is true. The women say to each other, 'There's that large stone rolled in front of the entrance. Who's gonna move it for us? How are we going to get into the tomb?' These are women to be most pitied, for they don't believe in the resurrection!

The ladies thought they were going to find Him! Wrapped in linen clothes and lying in the grave.

But here is the Good News: They didn't have to roll the stone away! For Christ is Risen! (He is Risen! Indeed!) Even though they didn't think He would rise from the dead, He did! They don't have to come to Him. He will come to them!

Yet even when they see the angel in the tomb their sinfulness accuses them. For whenever those who come in to the holy presence of God or into the presence of His messenger in Scripture as sinful human beings fall down in sin and fright. When convicted of our unbelief, our mistrust in God, our unloving lives we can only beg for mercy. These women came to care for their Lord's body and they find themselves accused of their unholiness, of their unrighteousness. Confronted by their sins, the angel speaks a word of comfort and Good News!

Christ is Risen! (He is Risen! Indeed!) **Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.** Despite their sins, despite their guilt and unbelief, He is Risen! Because He has died and is Risen, their sins are forgiven! At the cross Christ destroyed their sin when He was crucified. Their unholiness, their unbelief, the doubt was removed from the women.

But that message, **Go and tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee.** That sin, grave, and Satan have been defeated! Jesus Christ reigns forever! The greatest news in the history of mankind and the women high tail it out of the garden. They had been gripped with astonishment and fear. There is no body-the tomb is empty. They heard the Good News from the angel! In response they run!

Yet here is the Good News! He is Risen! Despite the silence, astonishment, and fear of the women the news doesn't change that He is no longer dead. He's risen, believe it or not. By God's living Word the silence is not forever. They will go and tell the disciples the Good News. Jesus, He who was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, dead on the cross, is RISEN! He is no longer in the tomb!

Yet, what about the disciples. They are proof that good intentions and zeal are nothing in the face of evil and sin. Remember, the disciples promised to remain with the Lord, EVEN to death, and most especially Peter was vocal, that he would never fall away. Jesus even warned them about making such promises that they could not keep. They still abandoned Him. Again, Peter is the greatest example of their fall. Denying His Lord three times before the rooster crows. Weeping bitterly at his denial. The eleven have hardly been faithful, hardly holding to God's Word. Now out of fear they have hidden themselves. Sin, shame, fear, distrust, unfaithfulness grip their lives. That's what the disciples are living with that Sunday before the women's arrival.

The Good News is: Christ is Risen! (He is Risen! Indeed!) Their shame, distrust, sin, fear, and unfaithfulness do not stop Christ from rising from the dead. Even in the angels proclamation these men are still the Lord's disciples, not worthless cowards. Jesus restores the disciples from their failures to that of followers. Jesus comes to them! That is the message the angel speaks to the women. Jesus is coming to them! That their sins are forgiven! That the price for their unbelief, unfaithfulness, and denials have been paid in full! That the gift of eternal life belongs to them. And this message is to be spoken to the corners of the world! To the most disgusting of sinners.

Even Paul. Paul, a persecutor of the Church. One who stood by and gave his approval to the death of Stephen. Paul, who actively sought out Christians to persecute them, and who called Himself the chief of sinners. This chief of sinners, the one untimely born, who wanted to destroy the Church and did not believe in this Jesus. Paul wanted to destroy the Church and found himself face to face with God.

The Good News is that Jesus IS Risen from the dead! That even for this chief of sinners Christ died to forgive Paul his sins. That Jesus would come in His resurrected flesh to Paul and forgive Him and make Him one of His chief apostles, but one unworthy to be an apostle. Yet it was not because of Paul's worthiness, for he is a sinner just like us and the disciples, and the women, but it is because of the grace of God. Jesus death and resurrection from the dead. As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: **But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.**

What of us? Sinners we all are. All of us self righteous, thinking that we are the most important person. We are like the women. We hear the story, the message of the angel and tremble in fear and then escape from this building and not say a word to our neighbors, friends, and coworkers. I'm like the disciples. Not trusting in the power of God's Word. Believing, like Moses, that I'm not very eloquent so the Word won't be effective. You may even be like Paul. You may have gathered with us this morning to make some loved one or friend happy, but outside of today you rail against the church or you may not even believe that Jesus died and rose again. It's a beautiful story of hope so that we can get through these troubled times. We are all sinners. All, left to ourselves, condemned to hell.

And whether you believe it or not, Christ died and rose again on this Easter morning for You. That He bore all of your sins on the cross and

crushed them. Though we may not trust in Him, though You may be an unbeliever. Even as you may have doubts His resurrection is Fact. And He comes to You to give you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Hold fast to His Promise that it was done for You. That His death on the cross defeated Your Sins. And that His Resurrection from the dead is His promise of Eternal life with Him to you.

And that same message that the women, the twelve, and Paul carried we carry to you today. **Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. CHRIST IS RISEN!** This day He comes to YOU in His living flesh and blood. He comes to You in His Word to make you His own. Though we are wretched sinners, beggars to the last, His death and His life is ours. When you have doubts, and guilt, and sins weighing you down, go to where He comes to You! HIS WORD, His BAPTISM, And His SUPPER where the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of the resurrection is YOURS!

This is God's truth, and it cannot be changed. Many reject Him; He is still risen. Many deny His resurrection ever happened, and the grave is still empty. This is a world of grief and fear and doubt, all tools of sin, death, and the devil. But they cannot keep Him in the grave, because He has defeated sin death and the devil. Nothing can repeal this joyous truth: HE IS RISEN!. He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia.

Amen.