

Resurrection Sunday  
4/4/21 CTK

*Mark 16:1-8; 1 Cor 15:1-11*

The three women we meet today in Mark's version of the resurrection story were all amazingly faithful and courageous women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome,

We know that, because Mark has told us that all three of them had not only been with Jesus through a good part of his ministry, but they all stuck by Jesus through his Passion in the most horrifying and painful circumstances that you can imagine. All three of them had stood and watched Jesus tortured and crucified on a cross. They did not run from that; they stayed with him to the end, and were with him when he died, even if they were watching from a distance, they were with him. The other apostles aren't mentioned at all.

After Jesus death and burial, these women had the strength, even while the temple police and the Roman guards were out prowling around the city looking for Jesus' followers to arrest, they had the nerve to go out as soon the Sabbath was over and buy spices so that they could go to the tomb where he was laid, to anoint his body properly. These three women had the chutzpah, as they were walking to the tomb, early in the morning just after the sun had risen on the first day of the week, to be scheming to find a way to get someone to help them to roll back that heavy stone that would be in front of the tomb. And, when they finally got there and found that the stone had already been rolled back from the door, they apparently didn't think twice, but just barged right into the tomb, all three of them.

And yet, once they got there, Mark tells us, when they found, instead of Jesus' body in the tomb, a young man in a white robe who told them that Jesus had been raised from the dead; and furthermore that they should go and tell Peter and the others about it, and to tell them that they should go to Galilee and meet Jesus, who was now alive, resurrected from the dead, this is what Mark says they did: "...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." And in fact, in the Greek the sentence ends with the word "for." As in, "they were afraid and said nothing to anyone for..."

So either the person who copied Mark's original manuscript made a mistake and left off the rest of the story; or Mark got interrupted and didn't finish his sentence;

like when we get distracted and we send a text that doesn't make. Or, this was just exactly what Mark wanted to say. That overwhelming fear was the first response that anybody had to the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, even by these faithful women. And if that fear is not overcome, this news is not going to go anywhere.

There are other versions, other copies of Mark, other endings, but this is the most authoritative. No meeting with Jesus in the cemetery and mistaking him for the gardener, as in John's gospel; no Jesus in his resurrected body visiting the disciples in the upper room through locked doors; no Jesus advising his disciples down at the Sea of Galilee on how to catch fish; no fixing breakfast for them on the beach – none of the post resurrection appearances we see in the other gospels. Not even a trip to Galilee that the angel told them to put together to go meet Jesus. That's it: the women were afraid and they ran away and didn't tell anybody.

So now if these giants, these heroes of faith, these three incredible disciples could run away in fear at the idea that Jesus was raised, maybe we don't have to feel bad about admitting that we might be a little bit afraid of that idea too. And that instead living as though Jesus were alive, we just clam up.

Because let's face it, to believe in miracles is a scary idea, especially to believe in the miracle of the resurrection, and to live like we believe in the miracle of the resurrection. And especially to share the idea with other people. The idea that Jesus is at large, as Will Willimon one of my favorite preachers likes to say. That's a great expression. He's at large. He is alive in the world and he is shaking things up. Because that's what Jesus always does, he shakes things up, he turns things upside down, and that's what got him crucified in the first place. There's no reason to think he would stop doing that after he was raised. Making things happen - most of which weren't our idea. We don't like don't like things shaken up. We like to do things the way we think they should be done. We like the idea that we are in charge.

We wanted to start a new mission here at Christ the King last year. This has been a heartbreaking thing to me, personally. Bishop was on board, the denomination was on board. We were going to walk alongside a new congregation that would be able to reach out to this neighborhood and be witness here I this place when Christ the King was gone, in a way that we might not be able to. COVID crushed that plan; totally put the kibosh on that; crucified it you might even say. But if that's not where God is leading us, where is God leading us? If Jesus is really alive we have to figure that out, be open to what that means. We have to trust, to confess that the risen Christ is the one who is leading us – just our church but us as individuals. Not

our ambition, not the media, not the political ideas, or Wall Street or our bank accounts, but the Risen Christ, whom we can't even see but have to know by faith. That's scary. No wonder we might want to run from that sometimes.

I think Albert Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." I'm in the school, or at least I want to be in the school where I see everything as a miracle. Where everything that happens in creation is of a piece. It's all one. If the parting of the Red Sea was a miracle then the sun coming up in the morning is a miracle too. Everything belongs.

Spring is a miracle. We are so blessed in the Northern Hemisphere that we celebrate Easter in the Spring, the season of rebirth. I was stopped at a red light the other day and I looked up and I saw this huge, gorgeous brilliantly green tree looking down at me, in place where just a few days ago it was just a bunch of grey sticks pointing in different directions. It's all miracle. As Christians we might say "Everything, all of it all part of God's plan." The beautiful, the ugly, the inspiring, the frightening. It's up to us accept and embrace the miracles, including the miracle of Jesus death, and the miracle that we celebrate today, that he is risen. And that because he is risen, we will arise.

It's a miracle that we are here today, for example, after the year we've had. But as I said at our Good Friday service and I believe it that the only hope that any of us has, for ourselves, our church, our world, for humanity, is in miracles.

And clearly Mark believed in miracles too. Because obviously, this is not really the end of the story. Otherwise how would Mark or any of us, know about everything that happened after they ran from the tomb. Clearly, these faithful women must have told somebody that Jesus is alive. So, apparently God worked a miracle in them in them too.