

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh  
April 4, 2021- Easter Sunday (B)  
Given at St. Mark's Church, Bridgewater, CT

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

**“So, 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.” †**

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This seems like such a strange way to end the story of Easter... Mark's ending has always bothered me. He ends with the women fleeing and saying nothing to anyone. Apparently, I'm not alone with my dissatisfaction, because over the years, many scribes and interpreters have attempted to supply a different ending to Mark's Gospel... they've tried to give it a happy ending. But the oldest and probably most original texts have the Gospel end here, with silence and fear.

Consider this story in a little more detail... These women are going to the tomb very early in the morning (at dawn) carrying spices and oils... these are the same women who vividly experienced the unrelenting violence that took place just days earlier. According to Mark, Jesus was crucified and died just before sundown on the day prior to the Sabbath and was buried in haste and without time to properly prepare the body. These women are coming early in the morning, at dawn, as soon as the Sabbath has ended (so as not to break the Law) in order to clean Jesus' dead body, to anoint and treat it with spices and properly wrap it. To them, the Jesus they loved was gone and his body needed to be cared for... for them, that body was uniquely his, the one whom they loved. It's clear, however, that they're not sure exactly what they're going to do that morning, for on the way they are worried about how they are going to roll away the large stone which blocks the entrance to the cave-like tomb. They're worried about the obstacles in their way that will prevent them from getting to Jesus. Then, when they reach the tomb, they are amazed! Something extraordinary has occurred, the stone has been moved away and they body is gone. And they see a "young man," who tells them not to be alarmed. Somehow, he knows they are seeking 'Jesus the crucified,' and he tells them he is not there... he has been raised. Well, under those circumstances, terror and fear and speechlessness are appropriate! They experience awe at what God has done... by raising Jesus, who was dead, God has altered the rules of the world they know. This message of 'resurrection' is a profound revelation of God to these women. This message from the young man is shocking and they experience terror at the incomprehensible power of God to change the laws of nature, to take away death! They are struck speechless.

This story conveys to us that God is present, profoundly present, in speechlessness... in silence. God comes to us not only in the loud Alleluias and hymns of our Church celebration, where we expect to find him, but in quiet places. God redeems us not just in grand, outward places, but in those inner, dawn-like places of our lives... those places broken by violence and loss... in those places where we expect Jesus is

dead to us. And yet we find that even there, in those tombs we create for him, he is not bound but is raised!

The story from Mark's Gospel is meant to challenge its readers... to challenge each of us. We are not to lose heart and not to be overcome by fear, but we are to believe the message of the young man, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here." When I prayed about this, it brought to mind a popular axiom that Dan has repeated to me over the past several weeks: 'Nothing changes if nothing changes.'

Most of us today, are trying to find that Jesus who was crucified; and just like the women, we are not sure how we're going to get to him, we're not sure about the obstacles we face that may prevent us from reaching him. And then we are often hit with the truth that *that Jesus* has changed. There are obstacles in our lives much bigger than stones or boulders— sometimes they may be our own sense of pride, our goals, the 'busyness' of our life, our sex life, our profession, our position in society. We each have our own set of obstacles that somehow blocks our own search for the Risen One. 'Nothing changes if nothing changes.'

A key point of this resurrection story is the fact that we need to look not for the Jesus who was crucified, we need to seek the risen Jesus. And, God has removed the obstacles. God has done the work. The world has been changed... the world is changed! God puts many people into our lives, like the young man in Mark's story... who tell us 'don't be afraid, he has been raised!' and who point us to where Jesus is today.

What are the obstacles blocking your way to the truth of the resurrection? And, once they're moved away, what will you do next? 'Nothing changes if nothing changes.' Don't worry about obstacles, because God has already rolled them away. Listen to the young man. 'Here is Jesus, waiting for you... don't be alarmed.' He loves *you*... come and receive him!

Alleluia, Christ is risen!!

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