

All Saints Episcopal Church

Steenrijk

Leidenstratt

Willemstad, Curacao

Easter Sunday (B)

March 31, 2024

DRAFT

by the Rev. Joseph Parrish

“When Reality Hits”

The Easter Gospel according to

Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary
Magdalene, and Mary the mother of

James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are

looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” 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.

Dear Lord, as you have loved us beyond the end, may we serve you always. Amen.

Christian writer Nick Adams said, “I met a lady in Texas whose father took her to get on the USS Titanic in 1912. They were excited about being a part of the maiden voyage. There at the dock was a sign greeting every passenger: “God Himself could not sink this ship!” Her father turned around, with his family, and took them back to the hotel. He refused to participate in mocking God.

<http://www.lectionaid.com/18-2/2e.html>

However, we know today that many still mock God, don't we?

St. John the Evangelist tells us that after the resurrection, Jesus passed through locked doors. St. Luke tells us that Jesus appeared and disappeared mysteriously, and ultimately ascended into heaven while his disciples watched in amazement. St. Matthew tells us that at the resurrection, the earth quaked, and a lightning-like angel descended from heaven. And in St. Mark's gospel this morning—nothing happens. The women go to the tomb, they see a boy

dressed in white. And “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.” St. Mark’s Easter women are terrified by an empty tomb and a well-dressed teenager dressed in white.

Whereas Matthew and Luke and John tidy up their stories by including the shocking, stunning, dramatic miracles surrounding the resurrection, Mark tells the most unnerving version of all, by focusing on the ordinary elements of the story--no tricks—just good news, and

sunshine illuminating the empty hollow of a garden tomb, ...and the sad and mourning women lose their wits.

Christian writer Max Lucado tells the story of a physician who misdiagnosed a patient. The doctor declared the woman to be dead. The family was informed, and the husband and family were grief-stricken. You can imagine the surprise of the nurse when he discovered that the woman was not dead but alive! “You better tell the family,” he urged the doctor. The flustered physician phoned

the husband and said, “I need to talk to you about the condition of your wife.”

“The condition of my wife? he asked;

“She’s dead.” “Well,” the doctor

mumbled with embarrassment, “she’s seen a slight improvement.”

.....

The women who visited the empty tomb of Christ on that first Easter discovered that there had been a slight improvement in the Lord’s condition.

“He has been raised,” said the young man sitting in the otherwise empty

tomb. And the world would never be

the same again. However, unlike the husband's wife in Max Lucado's story, Jesus had indeed been stone cold dead, not just misdiagnosed as dead; as his body hung on the cross, a spear had been thrust into his side, ripping into his chest cavity, and watery serum and blood flowed out, showing for sure Jesus was completely and utterly dead. But three days later, amazingly, he was alive again, and his tomb was empty. The Lord had been resurrected by the miraculous power of his Heavenly Father.

Easter begins with fear. Sensing the distress of the three women, the young man robed in white offers some surprising news as a comfort to them. “Do not be alarmed,” he says, “you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” This is, of course, the Easter proclamation. He has been raised; he is

not here. This is the hopeful message that we have been waiting for. The stone is rolled back. The tomb is empty, not because further damage has been done to Christ's body, but because there are some things that even the monstrous power of death cannot digest. This is holy comfort at its best. So why are the women still afraid? After hearing the young man's pronouncement in the tomb, Mark tells us that the two Mary's and Salome “fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them;

and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

What were they afraid of? Did they fear that the message from the man in white in the tomb was a lie? Were they afraid that they were being duped by a Roman guard who was having a bit of sick fun at their expense? Or was it something altogether different? Were they afraid that the mind-bending report that they had just heard was true? “He has been raised.” Now, how could that news stir up fear? To answer, we might want to consider our own fears this

Easter day. Are we afraid (after the pageantry and the glorious music) that we will return to life unchanged-- untouched? Are we afraid that we will retire to an afternoon brunch without seeing God? Are we really “afraid” that we too will find the tomb empty? Or are we instead afraid of the possibility, however slim we consider it to be, that God is out there and will meet us this very day? Are we afraid that God is indeed waiting for us? Perhaps we should be.

But if Jesus is waiting on-down-the-road in Galilee, you can bet that he has plans for us. No doubt he will ask things of us, the same way he challenged the disciples--thoroughly mucking up their lives. Uh oh. Perhaps this is the morning that the living God will grab us by the scruff of our souls to propel us into some wild scheme. Maybe this Jesus is like those people you encounter on sidewalks with clipboards and petitions to sign. You there, yes you, I've got your name on my list, now march out into the world

and make some kind of holy difference. Maybe that's what scares us. Surely we love Jesus; we go to church, at least once in a while if not much more. Yet we really do not want God to mess with us, to make demands on us, to cost us anything. God, 'Leave us politely alone--hands off our career plans and our politics--Oh, and keep your nose out of our approach to doing business and our way of conducting relationships.' We want Jesus to stay where he belongs, a kindly figure who presides over the sweet dreams of children; we don't want

him wandering around the countryside, tapping his foot--impatiently waiting for us to show up. That sort of Jesus is more than enough to make a person afraid. If he is not cold on the slab, if he is raised, well, then, to quote American writer Mary Flannery O'Connor, "He's thrown everything off balance!" No wonder that Mark tells us that the women "fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them."

Now, obviously, the women did finally tell someone. They must have or

we wouldn't be here to celebrate and worship the Risen Christ this morning. No, they couldn't keep quiet — their entire lives had been radically changed in an instant with the words “He has been raised; he is not here.”

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/mark-161-8-roll-away-the-stone-tremmel/>

[The Reverend Marcia A. Tremmel has served as a priest in Florida.]

What's so special about this celebration we call Easter? The truth is

the story of Easter little more than that – a story – until you experience the miracle of the resurrection for yourself.

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/mark-161-8-and-are-we-yet-alive-mclarty/>

‘ at the end of his story, the heavenly messenger tells the frightened women at the tomb, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

‘Still... Galilee. Why Galilee? Well maybe it’s Mark who is talking to us here. Perhaps he is saying to us, “Now that you’ve read the story, go back and read it again... this time, do so with resurrection eyes. When Jesus goes off to pray, consider the resurrection. When Jesus touches a blind man and makes him see, envision the resurrection. When Jesus takes a child into his arms and speaks of accepting the kingdom of heaven with a childlike spirit, view it from the perspective of resurrection. When Jesus feeds the multitudes, heals

the leper, brings the dead back to life, see it all, sense it all, feel it all from having experienced the resurrection.”

‘Maybe that is what Jesus wanted his disciples to experience. Galilee would bring it all back. Instead of focusing on the cross, they could revisit all those wonderful times when they were heady with the idea of changing the world. Except now, they will have a deeper understanding of what it means to be kingdom people. They could revisit all they had experienced there, and maybe then it would make better sense to them.

Now, they are confused, grief-stricken, without hope. Galilee brings a sense of recognition. Jesus will be waiting for them there, and in his presence Galilee will bring understanding. Galilee will offer new life. Go back to when we first heard the resurrection story and rediscover how the Holy Spirit has been working in our own lives to bring us personal resurrection.

One of the major themes – if not the most important element – of Mark's gospel is the misunderstanding by Jesus' followers of his mission and intent. The

disciples, according to the way Mark tells it, never get it. Never.

Maybe we too misunderstood Jesus' message to us at first.

The only way Jesus' story can be told, from Mark's perspective, is to go back and do it all again... with, as we said before, resurrection eyes. You see, on Easter morning Jesus will not be found in the domain of the dead. He prefers to meet his followers in the land of the living. And for him, that is Galilee... Galilee where it all started.

And how does it start? “Jesus came to Galilee,” Mark tells us, “proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.’”

So that is where we are, you and I, on this Easter morning. With Jesus, we’re back in Galilee where it all started.

Why? The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. It is time for us to repent and to believe in the good news that surrounds us and abides

in those who believe in the Risen Christ.’

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/mark-161-8-why-galilee-hyde/>

[Thanks to Randy Hyde who was pastor of the Pulaski Heights Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, and a native of Paragould, Arkansas.]

‘Mark knew that this was not the end of the story. In fact, in order for it to be believable at all, this better had be . . . just the beginning.’

[Thanks to Amy Butler who was Senior Pastor of Riverside Church in New York 2014-2019.]

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/mark-16-1-8-unbelievable-butler/>

One theory that I like is that the writer of this gospel account was writing in great haste as he saw the Roman army in 69 AD surrounding Jerusalem and getting ready to erect siege ramps to overtake unruly city and bring it to the ground, which they did do in 70 AD. The story of Jesus needed to be recorded

for others to read in later years, for us to read. The ending stories told by Matthew, Luke, and John's gospels in 69 AD were still only in oral form, yet to be written. St. Paul's writing to the Christians in Corinth, the reading from First Corinthians we read today is the earliest known description of the resurrection appearances of the Risen Lord—Paul probably wrote it in around 55 AD, fifteen years before the Gospel according to Mark was conceived and written. So, Paul becomes our 'resurrection story hero', the one who

first recorded in writing what stories others were spreading orally. To Paul belongs our great gratitude for knowing how the story of the Risen Christ was told, how it was witnessed, and how it was spread. The world now could not contain all the miracles that followed this amazing first Easter. It is in our own lives that we find some security of its truth. And we too are to be the witnesses to others wanting to know the ultimate truth, that Christ has risen from the dead.

Let us not cower from spreading the Truth. Alleluia. Christ has risen. The Lord has risen indeed. Alleluia.

Description:

Mark's Gospel account tells the story of terrified women who witness the empty open tomb three days after Jesus' dead body had been placed there. They see an angelic figure who tell them that Jesus has been raised from the dead. St. Paul's earlier letter to the church in Corinth tells more details, as do the three later Gospels. The women run away terrified, but the story from them and others apparently begins to spread to the whole world.

Tags:

Mark, gospel, Paul, Jesus, risen, Lord,
angel, terrified, resurrection, Matthew,
John, Luke, Corinth, Corinthians,
Jerusalem, Roman, army, siege, ramps,
Galilee, Easter, Nazareth, Lucado,
Titanic, God

St. Stephen's Episcopal ProCathedral

35 S. Franklin Street

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 18701

Easter (B)

April 5, 2015

And other sermons Preached by

the Rev. Joseph Parrish

DRAFT

“Jesus is on the loose!”

The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already

been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” 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.

He has been risen! Come let us worship our eternal Lord. Amen.

Writer Max Lucado tells the story of a physician in Arkansas who misdiagnosed a patient, and I have a personal experience of visiting with someone for which this very thing happened. The doctor declared the woman to be dead. The family was informed, and the husband and family

were grief-stricken. You can imagine the surprise of the nurse when he discovered that the woman was not dead but alive! “You better tell the family,” he urged the doctor. The flustered physician phoned the husband and said, “I need to talk to you about the condition of your wife.” “The condition of my wife? he asked; “She’s dead.” “Well,” the doctor mumbled with embarrassment, “she’s seen a slight improvement.”

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The women who visited the empty tomb of Christ on that first Easter discovered that there had been a slight improvement in the Lord's condition. "He has been raised," said the young man sitting in the otherwise empty tomb. And the world would never be the same again. However, unlike the husband's wife in the Max Lucado's story, Jesus had indeed been stone cold dead, not just misdiagnosed as dead; as his body hung on the cross, a spear had been thrust into his side, ripping into his chest cavity, and watery serum and

blood flowed out, showing for sure Jesus was completely and utterly dead. But three days later, amazingly, he was alive again, and his tomb was empty. The Lord had been resurrected by the miraculous power of his Heavenly Father.



Many archeologists say that from the first Easter the followers of Christ noted exactly where Jesus' tomb was located, and where the cross had been erected; these two places are so physically close that both of those sites, Christ's tomb

and Calvary, are inside the same long Christian church building in Jerusalem, a church originally constructed by Emperor Constantine's mother, St. Helena, in around 328 AD, right about the time the Nicene Creed was being drawn up and agreed upon. These are very real places, quite venerated of course, and they have been part of Christian pilgrimages for nearly two thousand years.

Today we only read the words again, that Jesus rose from his grave, alive. They may make sense for the very first

time to some here today. Others have believed in them nearly their entire lives. And others have come to believe in them over the years. We all are on some part of that spiritual journey, and none of us have “arrived” at perfect faith. But I believe we are not walking alone on that pilgrimage in our life, but that the Risen Christ walks with us.

And he is known to us in the breaking of the bread, in the Holy Eucharist this day, and in our fellowship together.

Here the Risen Lord becomes again tangible; edible, if you will; real; we call

it the Real Presence, the Real Presence of the Risen Lord. Resurrection is not a mythological event, but one that was actual and experienced by hundreds of people. There is no physical evidence, however, as is true for the most important spiritual events in our lives. But we know God touched us, talked to us, whispered in our ear, healed us, transformed us in some miraculous manner. We have the ‘real deal.’ But others still see these miracles in their lives ‘through a glass darkly’, as St. Paul writes, still suspicious that our

senses were skewed or that we were hallucinating or dreaming. But I suspect many here today have had ‘an encounter of the first kind’ with God. And we are still trying to interpret it for our lives. [I had such an encounter on February 11, 1973, the day my Father died in a fire in his home, a fire which miraculously spared my Mother’s life but which destroyed their home and both automobiles....]

On this first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of

James and Salome “bought spices so that they might go and anoint him [Jesus].” One doesn’t do anointing for someone who’s alive. They knew what to expect. Someone would probably meet them at the cemetery gate and say, “I sure am sorry about your friend.” And they would say, “Well, what can you expect?” They knew what they’d find: a stiff, cold body wrapped in a shroud. He’d been dead since Friday afternoon, so they probably carried handkerchiefs to cover their noses and mouths, because they knew what to

expect. They would make their visit, pay their respects, do the anointing with the spices they'd brought, and walk away, knowing what they had always known: you're born; you die. You try to do the right thing like this man Jesus did, and look what it gets you. And for Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, life would go on as it had always gone on, or so that's what they expected. But the last thing they expected that morning when they went into that tomb was "a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the

right side.” And the very last thing they expected him to say was, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus ... who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.” They weren’t expecting that. And they ran away in “terror and amazement”.

[‘This resurrection story helps] all of us who have low expectations], for example one of the volunteers in my former parish] who just got out of jail and [who kept] getting turned down for jobs because of his record. [The Easter story kept him] getting up in the

morning and continuing to search for employment, because he [knew] this [Resurrection] story shows that God has a pretty good track record for handling desperate situations. [And he finally found a very good job.]’

[Thanks to the Rev. Ronald G. Luckey who is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, served at Faith Lutheran Church in Lexington, KY, for this story.]

<http://www.faithandleadership.com/sermons/ronald-g-luckey-well-what-can-you-expect>

Former Methodist Bishop William Willimon, wrote, “I declare to you this Holy Week what I have learned in 40 years of ministry: the most curious quality of salvation by Jesus is his refusal to stay put. If we will worship him, [if we want to] be with him, we must go with him. We must be willing to relocate. All ministry in the name of Jesus is itinerant. Get up. [And get going! Christ is impatient with those who simply sit without following him.]

<http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/christ-got>

‘Easter begins with fear. Sensing the distress of the three women, the young man robed in white offers some surprising news as a comfort to them.

“Do not be alarmed,” he says, “you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told

you.” This is, of course, the Easter proclamation. He has been raised; he is not here. This is the hopeful message that we have been waiting for. The stone is rolled back. The tomb is empty, not because further damage has been done to Christ's body, but because there are some things that even the monstrous power of death cannot digest. This is holy comfort at its best. So why are the women still afraid? After hearing the young man's pronouncement [in the tomb], Mark tells us that the two Mary's and Salome “fled from the tomb, for

terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

‘What were they afraid of? Did they fear that the message from the man in white in the tomb was a lie? Were they afraid that they were being duped by a Roman guard who was having a bit of sick fun at their expense? Or was it something altogether different? Were they afraid that the mind-bending report that they had just heard was true? “He has been raised.” Now, how could that news stir up fear? To answer, we might

want to consider our own fears this Easter day. Are we afraid (after the pageantry and the glorious music) that we will return to life unchanged--untouched? Are we afraid that we will retire to an afternoon brunch among the [new warm breezes] without seeing God? Are we really “afraid” that we will find the tomb empty? Or are we [instead] afraid of the possibility, however slim we consider it to be, that God is out there and will meet us this day? Are we afraid that God is [indeed] waiting for us? Perhaps we should be.’

‘But “if Jesus is waiting on-down-the-road in Galilee, you can bet that he has plans for us. No doubt he will ask things of us, the same way he challenged the disciples--thoroughly mucking up their lives. Uh oh. Perhaps this is the morning that the living God will grab us by the scruff of our souls to propel us into some wild scheme. Maybe this Jesus is like those people you encounter on sidewalks with clipboards and petitions to sign. You there, yes you, I've got your name on my list, now march out into the world

and make some kind of holy difference. Maybe that's what scares us. Surely we love Jesus; we go to church, at least once in a while [if not much more]. Yet we really do not want God to mess with us, to make demands on us, to cost us anything. Leave us politely alone-- hands off our career plans and our politics--Oh, and keep your nose out of our approach to doing business and our way of conducting relationships. We want Jesus to stay where he belongs (a kindly figure who presides over the sweet dreams of children); we don't

want him wandering around the countryside, tapping his foot-- impatiently waiting for us to show up. That sort of Jesus is more than enough to make a person afraid. If he is not cold on the slab, if he is raised, well, then, to quote American writer [Mary] Flannery O'Connor, "He's thrown everything off balance!" No wonder that Mark tells us that the women "fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them."

The Rev. Scott Johnston wrote, 'Sometime today, my phone will ring--

as it does every Easter. A voice on the other end will say, “*Jesus is on the loose,*” and then I will hear the click of the connection ending. I know who it is. I know the voice. It is my roommate from seminary sharing his unique Easter greeting with me.’

[The Rev. Dr. Scott Black Johnston is senior pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, NY.]

http://day1.org/1241-deadly_things

Maybe you come away from the announcement of the missing body in the tomb with doubts and fears, as did

those women on that first Easter. Faith is not automatic. Faith is something that needs nurture. Faith is something that makes sense of the nonsensical things of the world, because, to the faithful, God is indeed in charge regardless. God will indeed redeem every bad or good thing that subjects itself, is submissive, to God's hand. And in spite of all logic and science, God can heal the unbearable, God can cure the incurable, and God can even raise the dead. Sometimes it is our memory of a past trauma that needs healing. Re-

remember that trauma and see God, and God's Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, right there beside you in every situation, because they were and they always are with us. Sense the reality beyond what our eyes see or ears hear. Show others the way that Christ has made a difference in your life. For you are being sent out today to be the proclaimers that Jesus Christ is really risen. His tomb was empty. But his heart is always full of love for each of us who turn to him for help in every situation.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen! Alleluia!

Amen.

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‘St. John the Evangelist tells us that after the resurrection, Jesus passed through locked doors. St. Luke tells us that Jesus appeared and disappeared mysteriously, and ultimately ascended into heaven while his disciples watched in amazement. St. Matthew tells us that

at the resurrection, the earth quaked, and a lightning-like angel descended from heaven. And in St. Mark's gospel this morning—nothing happens. The women go to the tomb, they see a boy dressed in white. And “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.” St. Mark's Easter women are terrified by an empty tomb and a well-dressed teenager [dressed in white]. Where Matthew and Luke and John [tidy] up their stories by including the

shocking, stunning, dramatic miracles surrounding the resurrection, Mark tells the most unnerving version of all, by focusing on the ordinary elements of the story. No tricks—just good news, and sunshine illuminating the empty hollow of a garden tomb, and the mourning women lose their wits.

‘We don’t scare that easily any more. As our computer-driven special-effects machines develop finer and fancier ways to show us things we’ve never seen before, things we never will see except through the power of digital

imaging, directors challenge one another to show us more, to be more creatively graphic, more extraordinary, more inventive than the latest extravaganza.

And [we] love it; [we] relish [these frontiers] of computer animation. <>

Now machines stretch our capacity to see so far that we may be able to

imagine even further. But St. Mark

knows something different. Mark

knows that as mesmerizing as the digital effects revolution may be, the key to our

response of terror and amazement lies

not in what we actually see on the

screen, but in what we feel in our spine, what our mind tells us cannot be, what our nerves answer with surges of adrenaline. Mark knows that the most eerie part of his resurrection story is a part he can't tell straight out. Mark can't tell us about the resurrection straight out because we've never been there. We've never had anything quite like a resurrection intrude into our lives before. We haven't witnessed resurrection, we don't have a biological explanation for it; indeed, we have a hard time even imagining resurrection.

Mark Gospel is not talking about a near-death experience—this is the real thing. We don't begin to have a handle on what it means for a fully dead, 3-days-dead, "there will be an odor" dead, 100% dead person to live again. Jesus didn't fall into a deep sleep, or a coma, or a magic trance like Sleeping Beauty in a fairy tale—we're talking about Death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns. Jesus didn't recover unexpectedly on the operating table, or wake up refreshed after an intensely satisfying nap. Jesus

was a dead man—and God raised him to life again.’

[The Rev. A.K.M. Adam, retired pastor of St. Luke’s Parish, Evanston, IL]

<http://akma.disseminary.org/images/FleshBones.pdf>

We were discussing the Triduum, the three day worship series that begins with the liturgy on the evening of Maundy Thursday and continues through the Day of Easter, that the clergy person does not give a blessing from the beginning service on Maundy

Thursday until the end of the Triduum (the “Three Days”)--the end of the Triduum happens on Easter Day, so be prepared for a special Easter blessing which has been on its way for three days!

[The individual liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil are not seen simply as marking isolated events, but really they are seen together as one saving mystery. For this reason, the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday does not end with a final blessing; rather, that blessing is

given at the conclusion of the Easter Vigil.]

<http://catholicstraightanswers.com/what-is-the-triduum-and-when-does-it-begin/>



(Joseph's commentary): In the original Greek of the text's last sentence, it actually ends with a conjunction, the little Greek word, "gar". The Greek word "gar" means "for" or "because". "Gar" ends the last sentence of the gospel of Mark. Most all translators connect that hanging phrase with the foregoing one, "they said nothing to any

one”. And the way we read it today during the Gospel reading is, “...they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” But let [us] have the mystery writer’s prerogative of recasting the phrase as a stand-alone phrase: “They were afraid because.” It does make good sense, but it is an incomplete sentence. “They were afraid because.” Yet there seems to be good grammatical and historical evidence that that is exactly how the author meant the gospel to end. The gospel was to end open-endedly. It is to be unexplained, left to

the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. And in fact this abrupt ending apparently caused such consternation in the early church that somewhere around 125 AD an author recapitulated and summarized the stories in the gospels that were written after Mark's gospel, and added several more verses to bring a revised copy of Mark's gospel to a close that is less jarring, less hanging on the edge, less incomplete. But just about every scholar agrees that the so-called "longer endings" of Mark's gospel are later add-ons, and

were not a part of the original gospel.

“They were afraid because” is actually

how the original gospel of Mark ends.

Maybe you can see where [we are]

going next. Or do you like mystery

stories?

Why, exactly, were the women at the empty tomb afraid? There is adequate room for speculation that the writer of the gospel according to Mark wanted us to fill in the blank. They were afraid because (blank, blank, blank). How would you fill in the blanks? They were afraid because (blank, blank, blank).

What are the questions you still have about the resurrection story? Maybe you are fortunate to believe just because your parent told you to believe, and you are an obedient child. But belief is not always that easy for everyone.

Remember that there are about two people in the world who do not believe for every one that believes. What makes us believers different? One rather theological reason is that we are called by God to believe. But that confounds others who say how can God pick favorites like that, capriciously? We

believers invoke the concept of chosenness, and say we have faith by the grace of God. God just somehow chose us to believe in the resurrection of God's only Son. If that is not a mystery, then I don't know what is. We by the munificence of God's love and grace have been given the gift of belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, our Savior. We did not earn this gift of belief. We were just blessed eternally by this gift of belief. There is no logic to it. Maybe our parents were believers, or maybe they weren't. But we are

believers, and that's that. However, that sort of attitude can drift into condescension or haughtiness, and that does not help to bring others into God's kingdom. Instead, we need to see how we can connect with current non-believers in a way that helps them make an informed decision about Jesus' resurrection, one way or the other. Did Jesus rise from the dead, or didn't he? Those are the two exclusive choices. Either Jesus did rise from the dead, or Jesus did not rise from the dead. What do you say? <>

>>>>>>**Bottom line**, Christians say Jesus has risen from his three day prison. We can sing it, but can we say it? The world is waiting for our breath of truth. Can we tell the story of the resurrection in a way that someone will be moved to believe? Are they worth it to us? Is Jesus worth it to them?

Be not afraid. Shout it out! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed!

Happy Easter!



One theory which is probably my favorite about why the original Gospel according to Mark ends so abruptly with the conjunction, “for”, the word, “gar”, in the original Greek, is that this Gospel is being written down in Jerusalem in 70 AD just as the Romans are about to begin to surround the whole city of Jerusalem and start to build the siege ramps around it and are well into preparing to completely demolish and burn Jerusalem to the ground and level the great Jerusalem Temple, from which the Romans will take many of the holy

Temple vessels and furniture and cart them back to Rome as spoils of war.

This ancient event of the carting away of the Temple artifacts to Rome can still be seen recorded today as it is depicted in three dimensional detail on the Arch of Titus in the city of Rome, near the Roman Coliseum. In this theory, the writer of this Gospel of Mark hastily gathers up his sacred Gospel parchment and runs for his life out of the City of Jerusalem in order to protect it right before the Romans complete the final siege ramps and have secured every

other exit through the gates [the portal doors] of Jerusalem. The writer of the Gospel may have died or may have been killed soon afterwards, or as he attempted escape, but his successors preserve his sacred text just as we read it today for all eternity, and in a very few decades it was called, “The Gospel according to Mark”. Mark ends just as the writer ended it as he hurriedly prepared to avoid the Roman onslaught against Jerusalem at the very last minute. There is absolutely no evidence any authentic version of the Gospel

according to Mark ever had a longer ending, although several writers in the second century appended various and sundry endings which have never been considered as part of the original canon of Mark or of the Bible, but which are often printed in most modern and older versions of Mark's Gospel.

However, recall that the Gospels were among the last writings of the New Testament and thus the Bible, even though they appear in the Bible before Paul's letters although written several years after Paul's letters. Probably

before Mark's Gospel was written down, it had been an oral tradition for several decades while the letters of the Apostle Paul had been circulating, including the letter we call First Corinthians which dates from the mid-sixth decade, the mid-50's, only twenty or so years after Christ's resurrection; First Corinthians was surely prominent among the Christians who had had the good fortune of reading that very important Pauline letter or who had heard eyewitness accounts of the Resurrection even before Paul's letter.

In First Corinthians, Chapter 15, Verses 5-8, we read about the Risen Lord appearing to over 500 people at once, after he had appeared to Peter and the Twelve, and after the appearance to over 500 Jesus appeared to the head of the third decade Jerusalem church, James, brother of Jesus, and to the other apostles, well before the fall of Jerusalem; also Paul notes that the Risen Lord miraculously appears to him, Paul, on the Damascus road probably sometime in the third decade, perhaps only a year or so after the Resurrection,

so we know with some confidence that the stories about the Risen Lord were very probably no secret to the early followers of Christ or even to the writer of the Gospel of Mark. But the original writer of Mark for whatever reason never included any story of the Risen Lord; however, the writers of all the other three Gospel accounts whose works date fifteen to fifty years later than Mark, from around 85 AD (Matthew) to around 95 AD (John) to around 120 AD (Luke), and recall Matthew and Luke are basing much of

the flow of the events in their gospels on Mark's accounts as well as including most of Mark's stories; those other Gospels give many more details about the Resurrected Lord which most all of us have probably heard before during other Easter services, or on television, or have read about, and, Lord willing, we shall hear them again in subsequent Easters.

(Joseph's commentary) And now we who have heard this Messianic Secret have the task of telling others the secret. Jesus' tomb was empty! He has risen!

‘The great opera composer Giacomo Puccini who wrote “Madam Butterfly,” “La Boheme,” and “Tosca” was stricken with cancer in 1922. In spite of his debilitation he decided he would write one more opera entitled, “Turandot.” Upon hearing his resolve to write yet one more opera, one of Puccini's students asked, “But suppose you die?” Puccini replied, “Oh, my disciples will finish it.”

‘Puccini did die about two years later, in 1924. Indeed, his final opera had not been completed. But it was

premiered at the La Scala Opera House in Milan, Italy. The conductor was one of Puccini's best students, Arturo Toscanini [who later would become the organist of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Manhattan]. The performance continued to that point at which Puccini's work abruptly ended. Conductor Toscanini paused, laid down his baton, and turned to the audience. He said, "Thus far the master wrote..., and then the master died." Then Toscanini wheeled around to face the orchestra, picked up his baton again, and

shouted back to the audience, “But his disciples finished his music!” And the performance continued to a glorious new ending.’ [a story related by Pastor J. Harold McKeithen from a story in “Lectionary Homiletics,” Volume III, Number 5, Page 26, 1992]

We are Jesus' disciples. His work was not finished. But he had faith in us who were not yet even conceived. Let us continue to finish his music, his work.

Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, alleluia!

Amen.

(Joseph's commentary)

Regardless of how the women responded at first, it is clear that they did in fact tell others just as the angel had told them to do. They did not let their temporary fright freeze their witness to the fact that Jesus' body had left the tomb, that it was replaced by a real live angel in white who was not Jesus, and that this angel talked. That sort of story is so unlikely that it rings extremely true since biblical scholars

are in general agreement that embarrassing reports or comments in the scriptures are most likely to be authentic. They are so true to real life that any editor who was trying to produce a nice and tidy account would have eliminated such distasteful stories about the heroines of Christianity. The very fact that the story is a non-complementary one makes it nearly certainly authentic. How many of us would want to be seen as turncoats to such a person as Jesus and be depicted that way for all eternity to all who read

the Gospel according to Mark? Here for sure a secretary would find some way to “erase” a few minutes of the recording. But indeed Mark ends just that abruptly-
-the women fled in terror and amazement and kept the secret of the empty tomb and the angel sealed in their own minds and hearts.

(Joseph’s commentary)

Death has not been bypassed but surpassed. Death has had its fangs removed once and for all. Death has been defeated and can only cower in the

darkness for a short time longer.

Death's terror and amazement has been uncovered for the puny power it ever had. Death for the believer is a laughable, temporary, despicable inconvenience which holds no ultimate power on any who put their trust in the Risen Lord. Death trembles in shambles at the feet of the risen Christ.

“Death has lost the battle! Where is its victory? Where is its sting?”

“Thank God for letting our Lord Jesus Christ give us the victory!”

“My dear friends, stand firm and don’t be shaken. Always keep busy working for the Lord. You know that everything you do for him is worthwhile.” (1 Corinthians 15:58 - Common English Version)

Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Amen.

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