

Pastor Jon's Easter Sermon on April 4, 2021

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!

I received a bag of Easter candy on my desk this week with no name on it. I brought it home and shared it with the family. I said, this is from somebody at church. I gave our 4 year old a piece of chocolate and said this is from someone at church. She came back a half hour later and said "Dad, can I have some more Jesus candy?" Of course I caved. But now we have a new name for Easter Candy. Jesus candy.

"He has been raised, he is not here."

These are the words of the young man dressed in white to the two Mary's and Salome as they came to give Jesus a proper burial.

The tomb was empty. The stone was already rolled back. Mark tells us that the women were "alarmed" at this sight. More specifically in the original Greek of the New Testament, they were frightened or terrified.

Imagine being the women. They went to the market and bought spices to anoint Jesus' body. They had a certain mission in mind... a specific plan. They would go to the tomb early Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body. Their biggest concern was "who was going to roll the stone away?"

But when they got there, plans changed. They found out that their intended mission was thwarted. Life was upended in that moment. How many plans changed for you this year?

The women at the tomb make me think of all the unexpected changes and challenges we have had to experience because of the pandemic.

Maybe some of you lost a loved one along with the 2.7 million people worldwide who died from Covid-19. Maybe you are dealing with unemployment or pandemic induced loneliness, or depression, or anxiety. Maybe you are "alarmed" at what's happening at our southern border, or the gun violence in our public spaces, or the racial tensions in our streets or institutions.

Even though we don't get the typical Easter Joy and excitement emitting from the women at the tomb in Mark's Gospel, the tomb was still empty. The stone was rolled back.

Jesus lives. The words, "he has been raised" signal that Jesus overcame death and the grave once and for all. God won the victory over the powers of this world. Jesus overcame sin and death. When it looked like God had lost to the political powers and the Roman Empire on Good Friday, God was saving the world.

For us, this means hope in Jesus Christ. No matter what we face in life, no matter how our plans have changed, there is still hope in the resurrection. New life is always around the corner. If God can overcome the grave, God can roll away the stones

The young man dressed in white told the women where they will find the resurrected Jesus, "he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

Many scholars believe that Galilee is a metaphor or a signal to readers to go back to the beginning of Mark's Gospel. If you want to meet the resurrected Christ, you will find him in Galilee.

So what happened in Galilee? Jesus began his public ministry there with his baptism. He was then tempted by the devil. He emerged from the wilderness and healed the sick and demon possessed people and restored them to family and community. He fed hungry mouths with 5 loaves and 2 fish. He ate with tax collectors and public sinners. He also ate with his enemies and antagonists who didn't agree with him. He calmed storms with a word. He had compassion for those who were grieving. He taught parables about his kingdom where all are included and deserve justice.

Like in our first reading Acts 10 for today. Peter says, "Truly I know that God shows no partiality." All people are now included in God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. For us today, that means all Black, Brown, Asian, and any other groupings of lives matter.

What does going back to Galilee mean to you? Where are people living on the margins around you? Where is there food insecurity? Where is injustice happening? Where are people in need of healing?

Where are people grieving? Where are people lonely? When you find these people and places, the resurrected Christ promises meet you there. If you are in doubt about your faith or the resurrection, or have fear, go to Galilee, you will find Jesus there.

Jesus meets us today in the Word and Sacrament. He meets us when 2 or 3 gather in his name. He meets us when we go out into the world and proclaim his victory over death and evil.

Alleluia Christ is Risen,

Christ is Risen indeed Alleluia!.