

Easter Sermon 24 based on Mark's Gospel

How about a little Holy Humor?

Q: What do you need if your chocolate eggs mysteriously disappear?

A: You need an eggsplanation!

Q: How did the soggy Easter Bunny dry himself?

A: With a hare dryer!

Q: How is the Easter Bunny like Giannas Antetekumpo?

A: They're both famous for stuffing baskets

Alleluia Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

The stone was already rolled away.

The tomb was empty.

The young man dressed in white said, "He is not here, He has been raised."

The story of Jesus' does not end with his death. Amen!

God did a new thing... the Crucified One has become the Risen One.

On that First Sunday after the crucifixion, the women's plans quickly changed. Sometimes God has other plans for our lives... plans for us to prosper and not for our harm, to give us a future with hope (Jeremiah 29). The women expected Jesus' body to still be in the tomb. Their biggest concern was who is going to roll the stone away? Then, in a flash, the women were called from the traditional role of anointing Jesus' body for a proper burial to becoming preachers of the first Easter sermon... "Christ is Risen."

How would you feel? Would you be a little confused and afraid?

Mark tells us the women were seized with terror and amazement. The original Greek words are *tramos* and *ecstasas*. The resurrection news changed them... put them in another place. But, still, they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Mark ends the Gospel there... abruptly. Why?

There were no resurrection appearances of Jesus in Mark's Easter story... no mistaking Jesus as a gardener in John, no tactile Thomas needing to touch Jesus wounds, no incognito visit from Jesus on the Road to Emmaus as in Luke. There was just a command and a promise: "Go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." That command and promise is for us too. We don't have the luxury of looking into the empty tomb or physically seeing Jesus. We have the Word of God and the Easter Story and the Holy Spirit who helps us believe it.

To me, this is a sign of grace after the disciples abandoned Jesus at the cross and Peter denied Jesus three times. They are called to try again. Jesus wants them back. They are recalled.

Mark's ending may be intentional. It is open-ended. Many scholars believe it is that way because we are called to leave the empty tomb and tell others about Jesus. We are the ones called to go to Galilee and carry out Jesus' ministry of love, healing, and reconciliation to the last, least, and lost.

Now we all can't just literally pack up and go to Galilee on a pilgrimage looking for Jesus. Galilee is a metaphor for all the people and places in the world Jesus encountered. In other words, we need to go back to the beginning of the Gospel and read it again. You will meet Jesus when you encounter people like Jesus' did... the one's whom Jesus touched, healed, loved, ate with, and advocated for.

Galilee is Gaza and Israel today. Galilee is Ukraine and Russia or all nations at war. Galilee is our stressed climate. Galilee is people reeling from natural disasters. Galilee is where people are hungry. Galilee is at Theadacare Hospital or St. E's, or fill in the blank. Galilee is in memory care units. Galilee is where people are left out in the schools or bullied. Galilee is when people struggle with their mental health or addiction. Galilee is when our loved ones battle cancer. Galilee is the death of a loved one. Galilee is broken relationships or divided families. Galilee is the person right in front of you... because we all are hurting in some way.

The good news is that Jesus has already gone ahead of us to Galilee. There is no where we can go that Jesus hasn't been or already

experienced as a human. The cross tells us that Jesus meets us in our Galilee moments.

And then there is resurrection. Jesus overcame death and the grave. Our baptism and faith in Jesus Christ give us a new birth into a living hope. Even as we suffer various trials, Jesus has prepared the way of resurrection life for us. We can experience glimpses of resurrection now. We have the promise of resurrection after we die. Thanks be to God.

Alleluia Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia.