

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

I have some what may be surprising news for you this morning.

The resurrection, while central to our faith, is not the end of the story. We have talked about knowing how the story ends during Holy Week as one barrier to our feeling quite the same pain and sense of loss as the disciples did. We tend to look upon the time from Palm or Passion Sunday to Easter morning as a story complete in itself. It is a story complete in itself but it is not the whole story and perhaps not even the most important story.

Reading the Gospel of Mark closely, though, you learn that the resurrection isn't the end of the story. It is not the end of the relationship between the disciples and other followers in Jesus. What we have is a bit of an endless loop.



We begin the Gospel of Mark with these words: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ... See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way...” (Mk. 1:1-2). We get to the end the Gospel of Mark with these words from the young man sitting in the tomb: “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has been raised. He is not here. ... But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him...” (Mk. 16: 6-7).

Jesus doesn't have the time or the inclination to sit around the tomb waiting for Peter or Mary or any of us to catch up with him. He has work to do and he has left the tomb to continue with that work: reconciling the whole world to God through love of God and love of neighbor.

Jesus returns to Galilee, the place where much of his ministry happened. There is still work to be done, even on this most glorious of days: The Resurrection of our Lord.

We don't get to the empty tomb unless we travel through the cross. The cross is a requirement and while painful beyond belief, it, too, is not the last word. Jesus is not bounded by what human beings do to him. Jesus is always ahead of us, giving us light and life when we follow him. Jesus being ahead of us, even as we go to the tomb to anoint him with precious oils, is what makes Christianity a living faith. The tomb is not the end of the story.

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William Barclay says that “the Christian life is not the life of a man who knows about Jesus, but the life of a man who knows Jesus. There is all the difference in the world between knowing about a person and knowing a person. ... There is an endless quality about the Christian faith. It should never stand still. Because our Lord is a living Lord, there are new wonders and new truth waiting to be discovered all the time.”¹

We see this imperative to new wonder, new truth and new life in the command to the women: “go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee.” Do not sit still. Do not count on the comforts and knowledge of your life to date to be the same once you know the Lord and accept his call upon your life. Listen. Be alert. Be ready to move. The Lord is doing something new and you better have your running shoes on if you want the new life that is promised.

Note that the command includes specifically to tell Peter. Peter – the one who denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed. The one we so often shake our head at as just not getting it- who seems to be dense and speaks without thinking. And yet, this is the same Peter on whom Jesus will build the church. A reminder to us that no matter our shortcomings, no matter how unseeing or unforgiving we can be, we are still included in the command to go and be disciples to the whole world. We who are broken are the best ambassadors because we can speak from personal experience of what it means to experience the risen Christ. None of us is forgotten or excluded. We, like Peter, are the ones on whom the church will be built and will continue. Go and tell the world: the Lord is risen, the Lord is risen indeed. But that’s not the end of the story. Jesus goes ahead of us into Galilee and we are to follow.

William White recounts this story of The Chosen People:²

The Lord God decided to select a nation to be his chosen people. First he interviewed the Greeks. “If I was to be your God and you were to be my people, what could you do for me?” the Lord asked.

“O Lord,” the Greek people replied, “if you were to be our God and we were to be your people we would honor you with the finest art and the loftiest systems of thought. Our great thinkers would extol you in their great writing.

“Thank you for your offer,” the Lord said.

Next God visited the Romans. “If I were to be your God and you were to be my people, what could you do for me?”

“Great king of the universe,” the Romans said, “We are a nation of builders. If you were to be our God and we were to be your people we would erect great buildings in your name and road systems so that your people could travel to worship in these great buildings.”

¹ www.studylight.org (April 4, 2015)

²² William White. *Stories for the Journey: A Sourcebook for Christian Storytellers* (Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) 32.

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The Lord seemed please with the offer, and thanked the Romans.

From Rome the Lord went all over the world, interviewing one nation after another. Finally, he interviewed a small Mid-eastern group, the Jews, who had a reputation for being shrewd traders.

One again the Lord asked his question. "If I was to be your God and you were to be my people, what could you do for me?"

"Lord," the Jewish people said, "we are not known for our power or our art or our buildings. However, we are a nation of storytellers. If you were to be our God and we were to be your children, we could tell your story throughout the whole world."

God, who also had a reputation for being a shrewd trader, said, "It's a deal."

We Christians grew out of the Jewish tradition. We Christians are also storytellers. Indeed, our own Bill Wieland has taken up the mantle of Biblical Storytelling. When Bill preaches through storytelling we hear the Gospel in new ways. We have ears that can hear when we do not bind ourselves to old ways.

There comes a time in your life, when you walk away from all the drama and people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Forget the bad, and focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right, pray for the ones who don't. Life is too short to be anything but happy. In the crucifixion and the resurrection, we learn that falling down is a part of life, and it is getting back up that is living.

Remember the cross. Celebrate the resurrection. And go- tell those you know that the Lord is risen. And the Lord is not done. We are on the move with the greatest story ever told. **Amen.**