

Easter Sunday Year B 2021
April 4, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord and Savior. Amen.

It would be really nice to have an Easter experience like Mary Magdalene, as reported in the Gospel of John. It's probably the Easter story we're most familiar with: Mary stands weeping outside the tomb. Bending down to look in, she sees angels. Turning around, she sees Jesus, who calls her by name. It would be nice to have an experience so clear and easy to understand. But most people, I think, get more of a Markan Easter, a story more like we hear this morning: "So the women went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

I think we can understand this fear, and this difficulty in proclaiming the good news. For one, the events probably didn't make a whole lot of sense yet. People aren't raised from the dead every day. This was something new and still very confusing. Then of course, the women had reason to be afraid because of the dangerous time that they were living in. If Jesus had offended and angered so many people during his life, just think how many people would be upset now that these women were saying he was alive again. But more than anything, someone being raised from the dead was so incredibly unbelievable, that the women probably didn't even know what to say. Terror and amazement pretty well sums it up, I think.

And so, by the end of Mark's Easter, every one of Jesus' disciples has abandoned him, the women are fearful, and no one is willing to share the good news. It's not exactly the joyful Easter we expect. If we're looking for a nice, clean resurrection story where everything is tied up with a nice little bow, Mark's gospel isn't it. Of course, that's probably why there are two additional endings to the Gospel of Mark that were added later on. Mark's gospel doesn't bring closure. It opens wide the doorway of the empty tomb, and it calls *us* to take another look inside, and then sends *us* out to proclaim what we have seen and heard of the resurrected Lord. We may not know much, but we do know that Christ has been raised from the dead. We may not quite know what that looks like yet, but we do know that Christ is alive and death has lost its sting. And so, in Mark's Gospel, there is a clear call for *us* to go out and proclaim this good news.

The problem is that we'd often prefer to keep silent, rather than proclaim the good news. This would be the easier way to live our lives. We come to church, we celebrate the resurrection, and we go home, back to normal life like nothing has happened at all. Like the women at the tomb, I think we'd sometimes prefer to "flee from the tomb, ...and say nothing to anyone" about the resurrection. It's just easier to keep silent. But God calls us to lives of proclamation. God calls us to share the good news of God's love and salvation through our words and deeds.

And the truth is that even though Mark's gospel ends in silence, people didn't stay silent for long. Somehow, even though the women at the tomb were silent and consumed with fear, and the disciples had left, the word got out. Maybe it started with a whisper, maybe with a question of if it really was true. The word came to the disciples. In time, the word spread to the street and eventually to the whole world. Even consumed with fear, somehow this good news of Christ's resurrection and victory over the grave has spread through time and space. It has spread to all of us. Somewhere, sometime, someone said something to us about Christ's resurrection. Somehow, despite the fear of proclaiming this good news, the word has spread through 2,000 years of

history, it came to each of us, and it continues to spread throughout the world. Hearing the whole story in light of Christ's death and resurrection, Christians cannot remain silent.

Perhaps this is the true power of Christ. The power of Christ is in the ability of God's word to break the silence of fear and terror. The power of Christ is found in the ability to prevail in the face of doubt and despair. The power of Christ is found in the truth that the women and the disciples could not remain silent forever. The power of Christ is found in the fact that we too cannot remain silent as we celebrate Christ's resurrection.

Certainly, the power of Christ is found in victory over death. Certainly, the power of Christ is found in the joy of the resurrection. Certainly, the power of Christ is found in the new life we receive in baptism. Certainly, the power of Christ is found as we are fed and forgiven at the Lord's Table. Certainly, the power of Christ is found in each of us as we are sent out in joy to love and serve the whole world.

The power of Christ's resurrection transforms our lives. Sometimes it may seem like it would be easier to ignore God's call for our lives. Through this Holy Week, we've heard again and again that the Christian life isn't easy. We heard on Maundy Thursday that it's easier to be angry and hateful toward our neighbors, but God calls us to love. On Good Friday, we heard that it's easier to live in fear, but God calls us to live in confidence of God's love and care for us. And today we hear that it's easier to be silent about God's good news, but God calls us to lives of proclamation.

As God transforms our lives through the power of the resurrection, God teaches us that we do not need to live for ourselves, because Christ empowers us to serve our neighbor. We do not need to live in fear of death, for Christ has given us new and eternal life. We do not need to live in silence, for Christ gives us these words of promise and truth. We do not need to fear for our salvation, because Christ offers forgiveness and salvation freely to all.

Christ is alive, and by his power, he gives each of us new life. Christ is active in the life of the world, transforming death into new life. And Christ won't ever stop. Christ won't ever stop bringing new life to those things we thought were dead. And Christ will use us to do it. When you eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper, you can count on this: the risen Christ won't curl up in the tomb of your heart and go to sleep. He will burst it open with new life. He will break the silence. He will fill our hearts with joy and love that cannot be contained. Christ is alive. And Christ gives each of us new life.

And so, we are not silent. We boldly proclaim with thanksgiving, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" **"Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!"** Thanks be to God. Amen.