

**Sermon: What Will You Say? Easter 10am 3/31/24, Mark 16:1-8****Opening Story: Brazilian Tribe**

Max Lucado, in his book, "Six Hours One Friday," tells the story of a missionary in Brazil who discovered a tribe of natives in a remote part of the jungle. They lived near a large river. The tribe was in need of medical attention because a contagious disease was ravaging the population. People were dying daily. A hospital was not too terribly far away — across the river, but the natives would not cross it because they believed the river was inhabited by evil spirits, and to enter its water would mean certain death. The missionary explained how he had crossed the river & was unharmed. But they were not impressed. He then took them to the bank & placed his hand in the water. They still wouldn't go in. He walked into the water up to his waist & splashed water on his face. It didn't matter. They were still afraid to enter the river. Finally, he dove into the river, swam beneath the surface until he emerged on the other side. He raised a triumphant fist into the air. He had entered the water & escaped. It was then that the natives broke into a cheer & followed him across. Friends, isn't that just what Jesus did for us? He entered the river of death & came out on the other side so that we might no longer fear death, but find eternal life in Him.

I tell this story because today is Easter. The day where Christ conquered the grave. His resurrection frees us from the bondage of sin and death and leads us to new, abundant life in him. We are called to live as a resurrection people!

**Scripture: Mark 16:1-8 (pp.54)**

*16 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. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen,*

*they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' <sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.' <sup>8</sup> 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.*

## **Reflection**

What a way to end a story, huh? In the earliest most reliable manuscripts of Mark this is how the story ends. There's no encounter with the risen Jesus, no invitation to look at the wounds on his hands and feet, no fish fry on the beach.- Just a meeting with a stranger who passes along a message. The message is that Jesus had risen from the dead and they needed to go to Galilee to find him.

If this ending is less than appealing to you then you're not alone. It didn't sit well with later scribes whose job it was to hand copy early versions of the original text. So by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, well over 100 years later, longer endings of Mark started to appear in different communities.

Although the original ending might not satisfy like the other Gospels it certainly can still speak to us today. I think it does this in a few ways.

**First**, we can relate to the women in the story. They didn't (initially) see the risen Jesus. They only saw the empty tomb and the young

messenger. Like us, they had to take someone else's word for it. As John tells us in his gospel, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing." Friends, believing in the resurrection is a matter of faith. It's a matter of trusting the earliest witnesses. There's lots of things that are hard to understand in this world, but that doesn't mean that they aren't real just because we can't see them. We can't see atoms (with the naked eye) but we know based on science that they are in everything. We can't see gravity, but we can experience its effects. We can't really explain how consciousness works and yet here we all are. The resurrection is one of the great mysteries of faith that invites us to get comfortable embracing the things we don't fully understand.

**Second**, I like the ending of Mark because it's easy to see ourselves in it. What do the women do with the young man's message? They don't tell anyone, right? At least initially they keep it to themselves. Mark says "[They] fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

How relatable is that? They were afraid. Fear is an emotion we can all relate too, right? As I talked about at our Good Friday service, fear is the very thing that causes the disciples to scatter, that causes Peter to deny Jesus. Friends, these women were afraid, and wouldn't you be too? They were obviously shaken by the event itself. Their expectations for how the day was going to go were completely shattered (Clifton Black).

But, how else might they have felt? I'm sure they went over it, and over it. You ever do that when something that's hard to process happens to you? I'm sure they must have asked each other, "You just saw that, right?" "I'm not crazy right?" Later, after the fear and amazement started to wear off they probably questioned what they

should do. They probably thought, who's going to believe us. Will the disciples think we are delusional or sleep deprived?

It's as if the ending of Mark's Gospel asks us this question: **"What will your response be to the resurrection?"** What will you say?

What will you do? What will you tell others about Jesus? How will you live your life differently, because of it?

Friends, the good news of the resurrection is that it changes everything. Jesus overcomes our sins that put him on the cross and he overcomes death itself when he rose from the grave. He crosses the river to show us there is nothing to be afraid of.

Because of Jesus' resurrection we can experience resurrection to.

What are the things in your life you need to die to so you can experience new life? What are the sins that are weighing you down?

What are the habits that you just can't seem to shake? What's something in your life that you have a hard time managing? For some it's anger for others it's sadness. For some it's fear or despair, or anxiety or depression. For some it's not having enough confidence or self-worth.

God wants us to learn to see ourselves as he sees us...as masterpieces in the making.

Whatever you struggle with, Easter reminds us that we are a resurrection people. **We don't live in the gloom of the tomb, but in the hope of the risen Christ.** Resurrection people don't live in the weight of the past but in the newness of the present moment.

Resurrection people set old ways of doing things aside so they can experience the new things that God has in store for them.

Friends, Mark's question remains, **How will you respond to the resurrection? What will you say?** Will you share the good news or keep it to yourself? Will you fear what others might think or trust in

the ways God is leading you? There are many ways to share the life-giving good news of Easter. We can share it with our words, but also with our actions and attitudes.

How can our words and actions reflect that there is something different about us because we have the hope of Christ in our lives? How can we let our light shine before others so that they might see our good deeds and glorify God in heaven? Friends, each moment is an opportunity to live as Easter people, revived by the hope of the resurrection and changed by the power of God that is at work with in us. What will you do? What will you say?

### **Conclusion**

So may you remember to not live in the gloom of the tomb but in the hope of the resurrection.

May you live as resurrection people who experience the power of God's transformation at work in your lives.

And may you remember to not keep this good news to yourself, but to share it with your words and actions, so that others may be helped.

**Children's Sermon: Symbols of Easter****3/31/24****Object: coins (orange), nail (blue), cross (pink), rock (yellow), empty tomb (green)**

Today I brought with me some Easter Eggs to talk about Easter. What kinds of things do we think of when we think of Easter? The Easter Bunny, easter eggs, spring. These are all symbols of new life. They remind us what Easter is all about, the new life we have in Jesus. Today I've brought with me some eggs that tell the story of Easter. Go through each egg in order.

Woops the last egg is empty. Did I forget to put something in it? No, it's empty to symbolize the empty tomb. Jesus lives!

Jesus rose from the dead and defeated sin and death, so that we might have new life too. If we believe in Jesus and ask him to come into our lives he lives within our hearts too, helping to guide us as we go through life.

So next time you see an Easter egg, I want you to remember the empty tomb, and the new life we have in Jesus.