

Mark 16:1-8

1 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. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 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. 7 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." 8 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 (NRSV).

For me, today is the happiest day of the year because we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. This is a story that I love to tell. This year we have had a series based on the Gospel of Mark from the baptism of Jesus to the resurrection. Now I am wondering, "What do I do now?" Doing a series helps us to follow the scriptures and helps us to understand some of the details of the story because it stimulates more reflection.

The disciples were in a dilemma. They were traumatized. Their leader was taken by a mob, brutalized, and treated worse than the criminals. It was as bad as it can get and could not possibly be any worse than it was. Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for this but they were traumatized when Jesus died. Then they start to wonder, "What do we do now?"

The gospel is more than a story. A story would have had the perfect climax at the triumphant entry when the people were welcoming in a new king. No human being would exchange that triumph for this agony. No human in their right mind would give up kingship for the cross of Calvary. The real deal is that Jesus faced the worst of betrayal, was seized at night in secrecy, convicted by an illegal trial where the innocent was found guilty. Jesus chooses to go to the cross instead of kingship. Death is the end of the human being. So, the disciples are thinking, "Oh well, this is it. What do we do now?" But death is not the end for Jesus. This confirms his divine status. Jesus does what no human being would do because Jesus has to face the cross in order to offer salvation to humanity. Jesus wins in the end. Jesus overcomes death and is the most victorious of all.

The argument between Jesus and the religious leaders is one of righteousness. The religious leaders claimed to be righteous but it was all for show. They were self serving and did not follow the will of God or care for God's people. Jesus calls out the hypocrisy. So, they want to stop Jesus. The argument between Jesus and the religious leaders is also one of status. The very top of social status was a king and the High Priest. Within the top realm were priests, scribes, and elders. Your importance in antiquity society was dependent upon your relationship to the top realm. Well, Jesus status as the Son of God is of a higher social status than anyone else. Therefore, the religious leaders reject him as the Son of God in order to maintain their status quo. The authors of the gospels set out to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. The gospels reveal that Jesus has inside knowledge of God, the will of God, and the kingdom of heaven. The gospels further reveal that Jesus has power that is way beyond any human ability which is revealed by his healing miracles, exorcisms, and power over nature. But there is one more

interesting characteristic that is evident here in the resurrection. Throughout his life, the opponents of Jesus were not able to disprove his status and now they are not able to disprove the resurrection. The main argument of the gospels is that Jesus is the Son of God.

Today's Scripture brings us to the empty tomb which presents us with verification that he has been raised. The women come first. The women had to wait until the Sabbath was over because it was illegal to travel to the tomb or work on the necessities of burial. Sabbath ended last night but they could not have traveled in the dark because it was not safe for women to travel at night. They get to the tomb and find a big surprise. The body is not there. They are told that he has been raised, he is going to Galilee, and they will see him there. Then they are reminded "just as he told you." Everything happens just as Jesus said it would. The Scripture tells us that they were afraid. I imagine they were shocked and confused.

We celebrate the life of Jesus who is alive and living with us today, in our hearts, in our minds, and in spirit. It is comforting to know that when you suffer, you can appeal to one who has suffered. When you are in mourning, you can pray to a God that has lost a child. God can relate to the absolute worst thing anyone could ever go through. God gives God's own Son, God's only Son, to us. This is absolutely the best gift you will ever receive.