

“Back To Galilee”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

Resurrection Sunday

April 5, 2015

Today’s gospel lesson is taken from the book of Mark, chapter 16, verses 1 through 8. I’ll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus’ dead body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. They were saying to each other, “Who’s going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?”

When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. But he said to them, “Don’t be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn’t here. Look, here’s the place where they laid him. Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you.” Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. This is the day the Lord has made for us to rejoice and be glad. Christ has risen indeed! Risen Lord, breathe new life into us this day. Open our hearts to recognize your presence in our midst. Give us signs of new life within. Give us thoughts of eternal life that began the moment we met you. Remind us of the promise for the future we have and that all your promises are true. Come Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tradition has it that when Mark the apostle visited Rome, he spoke with Peter at length. He wrote down what Peter—and then disciples of the disciples would repeat the process. When it came time for the gospels of Matthew and Luke to be written, they used Mark's account of what he'd heard from talking to Peter.

Mark's account states that when the Sabbath was over three women went to the tomb of Jesus—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The women were there at the crucifixion too. Mary Magdalene was there when Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body in linen and laid him in the tomb As the women hurried that early morning to the cemetery, they talked about how they would move the stone.

When they arrived they saw the stone was already rolled away. They went inside and saw and heard a young man in white tell them that Jesus has been raised. "He isn't here, sorry, you just missed him!" Not exactly what they expected. Jesus was already gone! What? Gone? Gone where? What do you mean,

away on business or something? It doesn't make sense. Mary Magdalene saw him die, and she saw Joseph of Arimathea wrap his body in linen. This felt worse than seeing a ghost. Where was Jesus?

The young man in white said "Go, tell Jesus' disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you."

..... Jesus never appears, and the women run away overcome with fear and shock, and Mark's account ends in silence. What a cliffhanger! How the heck is someone supposed to catch up with Jesus in Galilee anyway?

The young man dressed in white said to go back to where it all started—back to Galilee where Jesus' ministry, his healings, his teachings, exorcisms, and where a report went out that spread his fame everywhere. So the women head back to Galilee, and that's where Mark's gospel ends it—in silence. So what's *that* all about? What *exactly* is Mark trying to say to us by leaving us hanging?

I don't know, to me, it seems like Mark just wants to leave us hanging in the air. We're left with this sensation of amazement and wonder. Where do we go from here? If we were there and saw Jesus missing, could we have taken the next step of faith? There's got to be another level of Easter faith in this story that Mark is trying to convey.

What caught my attention was at the very end. It's when the young man in white inside the tomb told the women that Jesus had *gone on ahead of them*. Gone

on ahead—that's always what Jesus is doing for us. We may not know it or feel it, but Jesus leads the way *for us*. We struggle while filled with fear, we cry out. At times we think we're wandering in the dark, but no, Jesus has gone out ahead of us.

There isn't an alternative ending for Mark's gospel. Because of Christ's victory over sin and death we can know that Jesus has gone ahead of us and that eternal life with Christ awaits us. And just because we're afraid and filled with terror sometimes in our lives, just like the women, doesn't mean we shouldn't continue to preach and live out that good news. Mark's conclusion to his gospel is just as open ended as our faith is about eternal life, but it brings us hope.

Today we ate and drank together as we shared the Lord's Supper. Christ's presence, his living presence, is here with us. In the communion liturgy we spoke the words, "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." These words from the Great Thanksgiving are spoken all over the world. It is mystery. It challenges our logic and rational thought. It cries out for faith instead of reason.

Either you believe in the resurrection of Christ or you don't. Now we know from the other gospels that they did see Jesus for a short while, and when he ascended into heaven, they went on to witness and testify what they'd seen. And so can we, but this is one of those stories we have to finish ourselves. The lives we now live aren't the end of the story. There is hope for the future, and it rests on the

promise of Jesus—that he’s going ahead of us—and that we’ll see him again and all those we love

Sometimes in order to see Jesus and focus clearly we have to go back where we started. We have to go back to the place we first met Jesus. We have to return and go back and remember what we heard and saw and felt. This man Jesus, who is the Son of God, is our first love. Do you remember the passion you loved him with and the promises you made?

Just as Mark went to Peter in Jerusalem to write the good news, and just as the women went back to Galilee, we can go back and reclaim our first love. Let’s not settle for thinking the time has passed us by, that it won’t return again, no let’s go back and once again embrace the love that loved us first Be blessed all of you who are seeking the face of Christ.

Let’s pray. God of all hope, open doors of your hope and truth and place it in our hearts. Open our ears to the sound of your voice when you call us by name. Open our minds to recognize your presence that walks alongside us and lives in us. Motivate us to take the good news of the resurrected Christ into a dying world that wants to find and recognize you. In Christ’s wonderful name we pray. Amen.