

EASTER: Go and Tell

*Mark 16:1-8*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 27, 2016

I think it's safe to say that Jesus being raised from the dead is probably the single most important event in history. Without the Resurrection, the life and death of Jesus are just overwhelmingly tragic events. But with the Resurrection, Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power. We're pointed back to the very beginning of Mark that says, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Good News about Jesus is that God, by the resurrection of Jesus, defeated sin and death! And that's where our hope comes from. Everything in the Gospel of Mark points forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so it's a bit ironic that it's such a short passage.

It occurred to me that when they teach history in school it's primarily a history of tragic events – wars, natural disasters, you get the point. The history of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century so far is primarily about terrorism. Sadly, we were reminded of that again this past week. As I'm sure you know, Brussels, Belgium was attacked by terrorists, killing 28 people and injuring more than 300 more. Terrorists depend on two things: surprise and fear. This ties into our message Thursday evening about expectations. Terrorists are counting on the fact that people aren't expecting them. As we go through life we operate with expectations about how things are around us so that even when things aren't as we expected we don't realize it right away. Our brains are still operating out of our expectations.

It seems to me that we find a similar situation in our passage this morning. The women come to the tomb expecting one thing – they expect to pour perfume on Jesus' body – and they encounter something else – an angel who tells them that Jesus has been raised. But for now, they are not able to make any sense out of it.

As we heard on Thursday evening, after Jesus died on the cross his body was wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in a tomb that had been

cut out of a rock hillside. A large stone was rolled against the entrance, sealing it closed and the last thing we're told is that the two Marys saw where he was laid. That's important because they're the ones who are going to the tomb on that first Easter morning. They are eyewitnesses that Jesus' body was placed in the tomb and the stone rolled in place.

So the first thing I want to talk about is *the Stone*. We're told that the stone was "very large." The women were rightfully concerned about how they were going to get into the tomb. Verse 3 says that as they were walking they discussed the problem of moving this large stone.

You and I do the same thing. As we go through life, we get caught up worrying about how we're going to get the big "stones" of life – earthly obstacles – moved that we forget that God is able to move them easily. The women were most concerned about moving the stone. Their understanding of Jesus was too small. When they are confronted with the power of God, they are afraid and confused.

That brings me to the second point I want to make today, *The Surprise*. The women clearly were not expecting Jesus to be raised from the dead. They came to the tomb with perfumed oils to pour on his body as an expression of love. They certainly would not have gone out the evening before and bought those expensive spices if they expected Jesus to be alive when they got there. The Resurrection is a surprise to them.

The truth is, the Resurrection is a surprise to all of us. God has defeated death and has given us new life. Eternal life. This new life is not just something we get in the future after we die, but instead it begins right now, from the moment you first have faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. God tells us in His Word that the penalty for sin is death. Apart from Christ every one of us is dead spiritually. But Jesus conquered death for us and we get to live forever with him. The realization of what Jesus

did for us always comes as a surprise. It catches us off guard and we are overwhelmed by His unconditional forgiveness and love for us.

We see that surprising forgiveness in verse 7. The angel tells the women to go tell the disciples that Jesus is going before them to Galilee where they will see him. The same disciples who denied knowing Jesus and abandoned him to face execution alone are now forgiven and called to renew their discipleship and again follow Jesus. Their failures are not the end of God's plan for them and our failures are not the end of God's plans for us.

It doesn't matter what you have done in the past or that maybe you haven't followed Jesus the way you should, today he offers you a new beginning. Today Christ says to each one of us, "follow me." But following Christ also involves some responsibilities.

And that brings me to the third thing I want you to get from this passage this Easter, *the*

*Sending.* The angel tells the women to *go* and *tell*. God is calling each one of us to share the good news of the risen Jesus with others. Being a follower of Jesus is not primarily about what we get out of it. We are not here to consume religious services and then go back to our regularly scheduled life. Our mission as Christians is to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God and to tell others about the power of Jesus over sin and death. Remember our mission statement: *Living* to know Christ and to make Christ known.

The angel told the two women to go and tell, but instead they go out afraid. The passage ends by saying, "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." What about you? Jesus is risen. Will *you* go and tell? Think about that.

*Amen*