

## HE HAS RISEN!

Mark 16:1-20

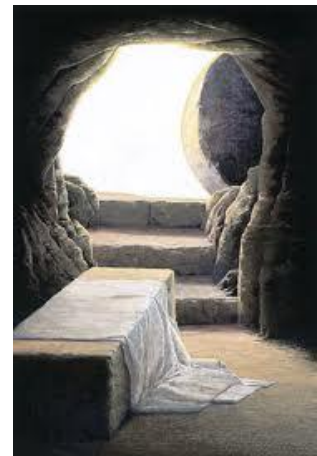
Key Verse: 16:6

*“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”*

M. Caleb told me the story of a boy who gave a funny answer to his Sunday school teacher when he was asked what Easter is about. He said, “Jesus came out of the tomb, but when he saw his shadow, he went back in.” To some people, the resurrection of Jesus is only a kind of knowledge in their heads or worse yet a myth. In our society, we celebrate Easter with bunnies and colored eggs. This tradition does not help our children to know the true meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. Today’s passage gives us facts about his resurrection. I pray that we may pay a close attention to the words of God and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to believe in our hearts that Jesus is living.

Jesus was crucified on Friday and was buried in a new tomb. There were some women who witnessed the horrible scene. As the soldiers hammered the nails through Jesus’ hands and feet, these women felt like the nails were driven into their own hearts. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (1). As soon as the Sabbath was over, they ran to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body with spices. They wanted to express their love and respect toward the Lord for the last time. As they went, they were worried about one thing: “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” (3) They were not strong enough to move the heavy stone by themselves. When they looked up, however, they saw that the large stone had been rolled away (4). They rushed to the tomb and entered it. To their surprise, they found that Jesus’ body was not in there. Instead, a young man in a white robe was sitting there on the right side (5). The women were alarmed. Who was this guy and where was Jesus? The young man was an angel that God had sent to help them (Mt 28:2-3). He was the one who had rolled the heavy stone away. What did the angel say to them? Look at verse 6. *The young man said to them, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”* Jesus was not in the tomb; he has risen! We are not sure if the women understood the angel’s words. I don’t think they did. Neither did they realize that the angel had rolled the stone away, not to let Jesus out of the tomb, but to let them in and see that it was empty.

Look at verse 6 again. *“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”* The women had cried all night, recounting in their minds what happened to their beloved Lord. They could not erase the images of the blood trickling down on his face and chest and his cry of “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” How could God let such a loving person die in such a horrible death? Seemingly, Jesus’ death was tragic. But in God’s eyes, it was not. His death was a life-giving



death. He died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Through his death we are freed from our bondage to sin and death. He died in our place so that our sins may be forgiven and we may become the children of God. This was the reason he had to suffer and die. And he was buried in a tomb.

But the angel said to the women, *“You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”* The tomb was empty! Jesus had risen from the dead! He was not in the tomb!

So what is the meaning of the empty tomb? It means death could not keep Jesus in the tomb. It means he overcame death. It means death for us (who believe in him) is not the end of our lives. Most important, it means God keeps his promises. Jesus was raised from the dead “according to the Scriptures” (1Co 15:4). The empty tomb fulfilled God’s promises (Ps 16:10). Once again, we learn that God never breaks his promises. We can absolutely put our trust in him and in his words. The empty tomb proved this one more time.

Now, what if God did not raise Jesus from the dead? What if the tomb was not empty? St. Paul asks this very question in 1 Corinthians 15. This is what he says, “... And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (14-19). Paul’s conclusion is that if this were the case, we might follow the philosophy of “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1Co 15:32)

But St. Paul quickly exclaims the following: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (20-23). In other words, Paul says, “Thank God for the empty tomb!” St. Peter says the same, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:3). Because God raised Jesus from the dead, we know our sins have been forgiven according to the Scriptures. Because the tomb was empty, we know that we will be in heaven with Christ as God promised us. We can believe everything God promises to us because the tomb was empty. Our life is worth the living because Jesus lives!

Okay, so we know that the tomb was empty and we can be assured of our salvation and eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then what? How should we live our lives, knowing that God raised Jesus from the dead? Like some people, should we say, “Hallelujah” and then go on living the same kind of life we used to live? No. Our faith in resurrection should make a real difference in the way we live. We now have hope in the kingdom of God. Our life in this world must reflect this hope, not theoretically but in real terms.

So what was the reaction of the disciples to the news of the empty tomb? They should have remembered what Jesus had told them earlier about his resurrection. They should have praised God with joyful hearts. But the reality was different. It was hard for them to believe that the same Jesus whose body was broken and was hung on the cross was now alive. This is the reality for us as well. We see people die. We see their bodies are buried in cemeteries. But we don't see even one of them come back to life. Death seems so final. So, even Christians who say they believe about future resurrection often are not sure about resurrection here and now. I mean their lives do not reflect the reality of resurrection. This was the problem with the disciples. Mary Magdalene and the other women were afraid (8). When Mary delivered the news to the disciples, they did not believe (11). What was their problem? They had faith in Jesus, but they didn't have resurrection faith. Why didn't they have resurrection faith? It was because they did not listen to Jesus' teachings concerning his death and resurrection. They had been daydreaming when Jesus taught them his upcoming resurrection. They were often not serious Bible students. And they didn't become faithful prayer servants until later. Because they had no resurrection faith, they had no hope which resurrection faith would have given them. They were still overwhelmed by dark and hopeless thoughts. They were weighed down under the power of death.

How did the Risen Christ help his unbelieving disciples? He helped them by showing himself to them and teaching them the word of God again. He appeared to two of the disciples while they were walking in the country side (12). He taught them the word of God until their hearts were moved (Lk 24:32). Jesus also appeared to the eleven disciples when they were eating dinner. Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief (14).

It must have been disappointing for Jesus to see their unbelief. But Jesus showed his own faith for his disciples. What did Jesus tell them? Look at verse 15. *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."* Jesus gave them the world mission command, in spite of their spiritual condition.

Jesus said, *"Go into all the world. Preach the good news to all creation."* Jesus knew that his disciples were sorrowful and fearful. Most people would have sympathized with the disciples -- they really were in a hard situation. It's easy to understand why they were so sad and fearful. But Jesus didn't feel sorry for them. Jesus knew that they were too weak to go out to the streets of Jerusalem, let alone other countries. But Jesus believed that they would go out to the ends of the earth. Jesus not only believed that they would go out, but also that they would preach the good news to all creation. Jesus believed that the whole world would be evangelized by them.

Look at verse 16. *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* This verse contrasts salvation and condemnation. Those who believe in Jesus will be saved. Their sins are forgiven. They become heirs of God with Christ. But, those who don't believe in Jesus will be condemned. This condemnation is eternal. It is eternal punishment. There are people who take the gospel lightly and live to satisfy their own sinful desires. They will be condemned to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15). The only way for us to be saved from this

eternal punishment is to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and commit our lives to him. Only the gospel is the absolute, unconditional good news of salvation. The Risen Christ said, *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* There are no other words in the world more serious and more absolute than these.

The disciples were so weak that they couldn’t even take care of themselves. Jesus knew that. How did he help them? Jesus gave them several promises in verses 17 and 18. These promises are for us as well. The Lord promises to be with us as we fight against the devil. In his name, we can drive out demons, that is, we can help young people who are suffering from sin and Satan. Jesus promises to give us power to speak in new tongues. When we really accept the world mission command in our hearts, our language or cultural barriers are no problems. Jesus also says, *“They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well”* (18). We can bring healing to those who are suffering by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with them. And the Lord promises that he will take care of his servants in other ways. Even though they pick up snakes or drink poison, they will not be harmed. This happened to St. Paul in Malta. (But please don’t try this at home to see what happens, which would be testing God).

After Jesus finished speaking to his disciples, he was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God (19). *“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it”* (20). As we learn in the Acts of the Apostles, when the disciples had faith in the Risen Christ, they became powerful servants of God’s words. God helped them to proclaim the gospel of salvation by accompanying them through his Holy Spirit.

Let’s pray that we may have resurrection faith and become useful servants of God for his life-saving work in our generation. Let us read verse 6. *“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”*