

March 31

Easter!

Mark 16:1-8

**CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!**

Mark's Gospel is very different from the other three. He gives you the bare facts with not too much explanation. This style of writing was understood to be less confusing. The beautiful part of Mark's Gospel is that it seems to be bookmarked with the invitation of Jesus, "To come follow Me." This short phrase is an invitation, a command and a road map to one's salvation.

The Gospel of Mark starts with Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James and John. Jesus says to them come follow Me and I will make you fishers of

men. So they leave everything and start to follow Jesus. His powerful words made them leave their father, wives, children and friends. So powerful are His words that they inspire them to follow Him.

Then in the middle of the Gospel Jesus explains what following Him actually means and includes. It will be a denying of oneself or putting your ego in its proper place. Mark 8\_34, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

Those are powerful words to hear that strike right at the heart of those who wish to follow Jesus. They are hard words to hear but with the inspiration, guidance and encouragement of the Holy Spirit all things are possible.

The passage this morning is the conclusion of Mark's Gospel. At this point that pattern that was set throughout the Gospel is not followed. It seems to be left open for the reader to decide for themselves. It does not end with the actual words follow Me. An angel tells the women where to find Jesus so that they can continue to follow Him.

“Jesus is going before you into the Galilee, there you will see Him as He said to you.” Jesus is expecting the ladies to follow Him into the Galilee. The story of following Jesus does not end on the pages of the Gospel. A new stage of following Jesus has begun. Things are much different now. This is not the old Jesus that they knew and were familiar with. They are following a Risen Jesus. One who has destroyed death by His death and rising from the grave. He has crushed sins grip on humanity. A whole new field of possibilities and expectations have opened up.

Things are very different now. Jesus’s resurrection has put all of His miracles in a new light. We understand it more, but not fully. All of the things He said and done now take on a new meaning. In their shock and fear the ladies do not understand the fully impact of what has happened. Do not kid yourself, neither do we two thousand years after the fact. The context has shifted with the resurrection of Jesus. We would learn after the resurrection that sin and death have been

destroyed. Longinius the Centurion who pierced His side said it best, “Truly this was the Son of God.” This morning there should be no doubt as to who Jesus of Nazareth is. The disciples, apostles and those who followed Jesus now realize that they followed the Son of God for three years. That is a powerful understanding of Jesus. What is more personal is that they had a part in God’s plan of salvation for humanity!

Our role in God’s plan of salvation seems clearer to us than it did for the disciples before today. Time has helped to shape and form our understanding. We follow the Son of God who was a great teacher, preacher, healer and servant. He gave us all these examples while He was with us. Our biggest cross today is to humble ourselves and put our egos in their proper place. Jesus did that and this was why He was such a great, Teacher, preacher, healer and servant. Our cross is to humbly follow Him in the examples He set for us. This is very hard at the best of times. Social media makes it even harder and more

complex. Remember that with the Holy Spirit's inspiration, guidance and encouragement we can actually do this and follow Him.

Mark's Gospel is about following Jesus and taking up our crosses. The account of the resurrection is a continuation of that idea. Jesus's resurrection is a challenge to us personally to make this a reality in our lives. There is work to be done on our part. To search and find Jesus in those Galilees that are in our lives. Being a follower of Jesus is not passive but very active. The story of the resurrection jumps off the pages and becomes reality in the lives of believers. That is what Easter is all about. Next week we will look at the essence of Easter and the resurrection. Stay tuned it gets better. Have a joyous and blessed Easter with your families and loved one. CHRIST IS RISEN, Pastor D