He Is Risen

at Scusset Beach

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Mark 16:1-8

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.

1. A Surprising Resurrection

About two thousand years ago, when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome visited Jesus' tomb to anoint his body with spices. When they arrived, they were surprised because they saw something they had never expected.

The large and heavy stone in front of Jesus' tomb had already been rolled back. They could not find the body of Jesus. They were surprised when inside the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe, sitting on the right. They did not know who he was. The man said***, "Don't 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 where they laid him."***

The man continued, "***Now go and tell his disciples, and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you***." The women were overwhelmed and were filled with fear and anxiety. They were so afraid that they could not tell anyone what happened at the tomb of Jesus.

As Christians thousands of years later, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus as a well understood fact in time. But for the people during the time of Jesus, the resurrection was a surprise. It was shocking news.

Can you imagine, a loved one passing away only to rise from the dead a few days later? Can you imagine how you would feel if you were one of the three women? How would you react to the situation? It would be the impossible standing before you.

2. Two Different Responses

The resurrection of Jesus has been retold and remembered for the past 2,000 years. When people hear the retelling, there are often two reactions. One group of people hear the story but don't believe. The story defies our understanding of life and science. It seems just too impossible to believe.

The second group however hear the story and are able to believe in the mystery that is the resurrection of Jesus. The story is an amazing and difficult to believe. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus, what is your evidence for his resurrection? Some might say that Jesus' empty tomb is the evidence. Well, the empty tomb does not prove his resurrection. The three women thought that Jesus' body had been stolen.

Long time ago I visited Jesus' tomb in Israel. The guide of my trip told us not to find the resurrected Jesus in his empty tomb, but at the hearts of Jesus' disciples. If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen, his disciples would not be martyred to preach the resurrection of Jesus. For the past 2,000 years many Christians sacrified their money, time, and talents to share the gospel.

3. Why Galilee?

If Jesus were not risen from the dead, the young man in the tomb would not tell the three women to go to Jesus' disciples in Galilee to tell them that the risen Jesus would meet them in Galilee. Why would Jesus desire to go to Galilee rather than remain in Jerusalem? Galilee was the place where Jesus met his disciples for the first time. Galilee was also the hometown for many of the disciples. The risen Jesus wanted to meet his disciples in Galilee so that they could continue his ministry.

Matthew 4:15 & 16 also says that the Messiah would come to Galilee as a great light according the prophet Isaiah 9:1, "***Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*** [16] ***the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned***.*"* Galilee is the place where people were in need of a great light.

4. Have you met the Risen Jesus?

A question that I have for you and me is "have we met the risen Jesus?" If we have no relationship with the risen Christ, his resurrection does not mean much to us. Think about the case of St. Paul. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, there was a man named Saul who was on his way to Damascus to find and arrest Christians and put them in jail. On the road, Saul heard a voice from heaven, ***"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*** Saul asked***, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting***" (Acts 9:4-5).

Saul had been a devoted Jew his entire life, and yet he had never met Jesus and did not know who he really was. He thought Jesus was one of troublemakers in Jewish religion. However, when Saul met Jesus on the road to

Damascus, he became a witness to the good news of Jesus. He became an apostle to the Gentiles.

Does Jesus call us as he called Saul two thousand years ago? I believe so. I can still remember the time when I heard Jesus call and ask me a question, “Do you love me?” When I said I did, Jesus called me to take care of his sheep as he said to Peter at the sea of Tiberias (John 21:15-17). That’s why I went to seminary and became a pastor in the United Methodist Church.

5. Conclusion

Where is Galilee for you and me? It is the town of Bourne or where you live. Today’s scripture tells us to go to Galilee and meet the risen Jesus. When we meet the risen Lord, we will be filled with the sense of mission and passion. We will be Jesus’ witnesses to his resurrection. What do witnesses do? They will tell others that Jesus is risen from the dead and death is not the end of our life. In 1 Corinthians 15:17-19, Paul says, “***If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18]Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. [19]If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied***.”

As a pastor I officiate funerals often. When I served a church in Missouri sometimes I had funerals more than once a month. Recently one of my church members passed away and we will have a memorial service for him soon. We are so sad when our loved ones leave us one by one. But we still have hope because Jesus is risen and we will be raised too.

1 Corinthians 15:20 & 22-23 say, “***Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died…. [22]for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ***.” When Jesus returns, those who died in Christ will be raised.

6. Application

If there were no resurrection of Jesus, his disciples would not be willing to die to preach that Jesus was risen. And there would be no church today. Without Jesus’ resurrection, none of us would be here this morning. There are many people who want to understand the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus. They often search for evidence for his resurrection. For those of us who have met the risen Christ, we should be witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

For Orthodox Christians, there is nothing more important than the resurrection of Jesus. So they greet each other by saying “Christ is Risen” & “Indeed, He is Risen.” Would you greet with the person next to you by saying “Christ is Risen” and “Indeed, He is Risen”? And would you be witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus to your neighbors not only by words but by living the resurrected life and giving hope to others?