

Rev. Danny Mackey
The Resurrection of Our Lord
April 1, 2018
Mark 1:1-8
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

[Adapted from Rev. Brent Kuhlman's sermon series in *Concordia Pulpit Resources*, Vol. 27, Part 2 (Concordia: St. Louis), 65-66.]

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

You had such high hopes in Him. Jesus was everything to you. You followed Him because you believed He was the Messiah, the promised Savior. He did things only God could do. He said words only God could possibly say. This always amazed you, many times to the point of absolute fear. You were there when He healed a paralytic and forgave his sins. It amazed everyone (Mk 2:12). When He stilled the storm, you were terrified and asked one another: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (4:41). You were astonished and absolutely amazed when He brought Jairus's dead daughter back to life (5:42) and when He walked on water (6:51). On the mountain, His appearance changed, transfigured; you were scared out of your wits (9:6). Could He be...? Sure think so! Could be. But then He went and preached a scandalous sermon series about insistently heading up to Jerusalem. He was fixated on Jerusalem. Jerusalem was on the brain. He was obsessive about Jerusalem. Three times He boldly and audaciously proclaimed that He'd be...handed over to the religious bigwigs, arrested, manhandled, spit upon, relentlessly ridiculed! If that wasn't bad enough, He resolutely promised that He sentenced to die, flogged, and executed. Then He said something about rising on (what was that?)...the third day. Really? Again, you were totally blown away. Astonished. Genuinely scared.

But you'd get over it. Like a fevered dream or a bad breakup, you'd get over it. And you thought He would too. That Jerusalem thing was just a bit of whimsy, a momentary craze—you thought. After all, these kinds of things don't happen—aren't supposed to happen—ever—to Messiahs. And Jesus was the real deal. Somehow all of it would work out. At least you hoped He was—and it would. You were especially confident after all the miraculous things He did and the authoritative sermons He preached!

Now what? He'd dead. Buried. What good is a dead and buried Messiah? Can you trust Jesus anymore? Can you?

But now...what're you to do?

All that's left is to let the ladies who took care of His physical needs during His earthly life do their thing. They looked after Him. Might as well do it one last time. Spices in hand, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome head to the grave to anoint His dead body.

Strange. Very bizarre. The large stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. Might as well go in. Another big surprise. They see an angel. Alarming! Shocking! "No need to be alarmed, ladies. I know you expected to see the corpse of crucified Nazarene Jesus. Well, He is risen. Therefore He's not here. See. Take a look. This is where they put His body. Not there anymore! Now, you go tell His disciples and especially Peter. He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see Him there just as He told you."

What? Can it be? Really? Risen from the dead?

Absolutely! Just like He said! Remember the last part of the Jerusalem fixation? On the third day...?

Wow! The biggest miracle of all! Straight from His mouth! He said so! Resurrection! His! On the third day!

As a result, you and the women are visibly shaken. You never expected this to happen! Seriously, you didn't! Who could? Your hearts are pounding. The adrenaline is flowing. Your minds are racing. Your hands are trembling. All your thoughts are jumbled, can't think straight at the moment. So all you can do is beat it. Bolt. Skedaddle. You're so afraid. You dare not say anything. Not...a...peep.

Well, I'd better remind you of something else the angelic preacher in the tomb told you. After all, sermons are so easily forgotten, in one ear and out the other. He said: "But go, tell His disciples and Peter. He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see Him there. He said so. He promised."

Why meet Jesus in Galilee?

You're reluctant to go there, aren't you? Of course you are! After all, you've all got a bad conscience. You and Peter denied and renounced Jesus and called down curses on yourselves. You deserted Him. Left Him high and dry when push came to shove. You wouldn't be caught dead hanging around the humiliated, arrested, and sentenced-to-death Jesus. You wouldn't go to His crucifixion; rather, you hid in His darkest hour. The ladies' boldness

shamed your cowardice. What a difficult and dreadful falling away you committed! You wouldn't let Jesus be God for you in His shocking suffering and appalling Good Friday dying! You stayed away! You had no use for Him! What sin. What treachery. What idolatry.

This is why you're so hesitant to go meet Jesus in Galilee. You're uncertain. After all, what do you expect from Jesus—the Son of God, the Messiah, whom you abandoned and disowned—if He's truly risen from the dead? Payback, maybe? Retribution and a divine reckoning of the highest order against you for your unfaithful sins against Him, right?

No. Not hardly. Not even close. Couldn't be further from the truth.

He is risen! From the tomb! Not to give you what you expect but what you never, ever imagined as a deadbeat, loser sinner. It's totally amazing what He will give to you. Mind-blowingly amazing. Make-your-body-tremble remarkable. Melt-your-heart astonishing. He would meet you in Galilee to... (are you ready for this?)...to greet you with a friendly and genuinely pleased Easter "Good morning, friends!"

And more! So much more. He'll tell you the best news you could ever hear as a sinner:

"I AM GOD FOR YOU.

"I am not your enemy. I am not against you, but I am God for you—in this way: I died for you, Peter, and for the rest of you disciples. I took all your sin. I buried it in the black hole of My tomb, and I left it there forever. It's no more. I forgive you. I don't count your sin against you at all."

Forgiveness! It's what His rising from the tomb is all about. His divine forgiveness is for you. He comes to you, just as He did in Galilee. He meets you in the Sacrament today, too, in order to act as God for you. Listen. His crucified and risen body and blood He give you with the bread and wine with the promise that you are forgiven. "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," He declares.

And He tells you what this forgiveness means for you. His divine Good Friday and Easter forgiveness announce the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Because Jesus rose, His Good Friday death wasn't in vain. It truly counts for you. You are forgiven. Since He forgives you, you too will be raised on the Last Day from the grave. He will not leave you there. You are precious to Him—God for you, Jesus. As you believe, so you have. Happy Easter!

Jesus is risen!