

Where Jesus Is

Easter, The Resurrection of our Lord [b]

April 1, 2018

Mark 16:1-8

¹ When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, 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 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

The women brought spices to the tomb. They were looking for a corpse. They were expecting death.

The problem they saw wasn't something deep and existential, such as how one might have eternal life or how a sinner is justified before God, but was simply, Who can we find to roll away the stone from the tomb entrance?

Because, they presumed death. The corpse was a given. Their bringing of the spices, their questioning about how to get to the corpse to anoint it, this is all their concession that the one thing certain is the corpse. Now the only thing is how to handle it, how to not let it overcome you, how to act in such a way that the death is minimized or covered up from the eyes and the noses of those still living.

Yet, just a week prior to these women approaching the tomb to find a corpse, Jesus had publicly taught

that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Responding to the Sadducees who taught that there is no eternal life, and that everything that is real is what you can see with your eyes and touch with your hand and smell with your nose, Jesus had responded,

“That the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.”

[Luke 20:38]

So there are two realities. One is the reality that the women could see with their eyes, touch with their hands, and smell with their noses. That’s the reality of having seen Jesus die on the cross and now coming to the tomb to anoint the dead body with perfume.

That is the reality we all know. It is the reality belonging to us in this fallen world and according to our sinful flesh, where everything is given over to death.

The other reality is the one delivered to us by the Word of God. It is the reality Jesus spoke to them when he identified his Father as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and because he is their God, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living, even though someone had put their corpses into the ground.

This reality of life in the face of death is known not by sight and touch and smell, but by faith. And faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and the Word of God is the Word of Christ, crucified for our sin and on the third day raised up from the dead.

We stand as did the women. We stand as those who know the certainty of things we can see and touch and smell. We see a baby, and we know there is life, and that we did not create it; and we give thanks for the Creator of all life, even though we can’t see him.

We see a loved one die, and we know there is death; we try to forestall it, but we cannot stop it, and we despair.

Where will we find our Lord in this? We will find him not among the dead, but among the living, for he is the God not of the dead but the living.

He gives us his Word of life. In that Word, we find him. Coming to us, confronting us in our sin, encountering us in our fear of death, and bringing to us his gift of life. For he is God not of the dead, but of the living, and where he is coming to the sinner in his Word, it's life.

He had already come to the women in his Word.

By his Word he earlier had cast the demons out of Mary Magdalene.

By his Word he had forgiven them their sin and made them his own.

By his Word they were given to know that his death on the cross was not a terrible accident of history, but was the Son of God coming among sinners not to be served, but to serve, giving a life a ransom for many.

And by his Word they were given to know that on the third day he would be raised up from the dead, so that they would not need to look for a dead body in the tomb, but they could go find him, living and breathing, speaking to his disciples, delivering his gifts to the living.

Mark 16:6:

Entering the tomb, [the women] saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

See the place where they laid him. There should be a corpse in that place. But there is not. He is risen. Death's grip is broken. Life reigns. Jesus lives never to die again.

So where should we find the One who no corpse, but is living?

The women will find him just where he had told them—among his disciples.

He would be speaking to them the Word of life.

He would be forgiving their sins, cleansing their consciences.

And then, before he ascends to his Father, he would be giving his Apostles the gift of Baptism, so that by Baptism they could go forth into the world making disciples and joining sinners to the cross and the resurrection he accomplished at Jerusalem.

Where will we find the Living One? Just where he promised us.

We will find the Living One wherever he places his Name and has his cross preached. For he promised that wherever he gathers two or three to his Name, there he is in the midst of them.

We will find him where the sinner is being baptized, for in Baptism he is clothing the sinner in his own righteousness, binding the sinner to his cross and resurrection, and promising to be with the sinner through all things, even until the end of the age.

We will find the Living One when and where he is coming among us in his Body and Blood. For a dead man has no body and blood to give, the Risen Christ is coming in fullness wherever he is making himself bodily present among his people.

We will find the Living One wherever his Absolution is being spoken. For in those words, his voice in Heaven, by which he is justifying us before his Father, is also being spoken here on Earth into our own

ears.

We will find the Living One when and where he has promised to come to us. We will find him in his Gospel.

He is risen. Death has no hold. Life reigns. The resurrected One is among us in his Word and sacraments. By his gift and promise, we belong to that resurrection.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.