

Resurrection of Our Lord
03/31/2013
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Mark 16:1-8
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I bring you grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this morning is from the Gospel according to Saint Mark the 16th chapter.

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.”

Thus far the Word of God.

Do you ever get so wrapped in something that you forget what you're doing? You're working through some task and you get to the place of your work for that particular thing and you find that you've left a needed tool, or money, or directions or recipe, whatever the thing you need to accomplish your task isn't with you. I can't tell you the number of times I've done something like that. It's easy to get so preoccupied about some tasks that you forget to bring what you need for the task.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Clopas are going to the tomb. This was early Sunday morning. They'd waited until the Sabbath (Saturday) was over

to go to the tomb to see about taking care of Jesus' body. They'd waited since Friday. They'd observed the Sabbath like all good Jews did back then. As soon as the time of the morning was such that when they got to the tomb it'd be light they headed out. They headed out on their task but forgot one thing. In order to get to the body of Jesus the stone would have to be rolled out of the way so they could go inside the opening.

They'd made no provisions for rolling the stone away. They evidently couldn't do it and they'd failed to get any males to go along with them to do it for them. So on the way they begin to wonder, "*Who is going to roll away the stone for us?*" Who is going to complete this task for us?

If we imagine the end of life, our life, as that tomb Jesus lay in we could see where we might arrive at the end of our life without the tools in place to get us from our bodily death and into our heavenly life. God tells us often that life is not to be lived just in pursuit of temporal joys and things. There's more to life than meets the eye on a day to day basis. Our Lord told this parable, "*The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'*"

If we're so busy with that we're distracted from the things of God by the riches of this life then when our end arrives we could be ill prepared for eternity. No, you know really that's not right. Here are the facts: No matter what we do, in and of ourselves, from now until the end, if we arrive there by ourselves we will be ill prepared for eternity. There's no way for us to prepare alone or with just our neighbor for our death or Christ's arrival.

The Marys get to the tomb and the stone is already rolled back. They didn't need to roll it back. Jesus was risen, they didn't know that yet but that was the deal. God opened the tomb. God made the provision that would make it possible to see that their Lord had risen. They didn't have to do a thing.

Of course they didn't at first believe Jesus was risen. They believed someone had stolen Jesus body. The Marys found themselves at a crossroads concerning faith. They'd seen Jesus killed. They knew His body was taken off the tree and laid in this tomb. They knew the tomb was sealed. But they didn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead. Mary Magdalene would go to the disciples and tell them what the angel said. She'd tell them Jesus was missing and they did not know where He was. And then she'd return later and hear Jesus Himself speak her name.

But before He did, she and the other Mary were still in unbelief about the resurrection and they didn't say anything to anyone except to tell Peter and John. The Marys couldn't open the tomb and they couldn't believe the Word told to them either. They weren't yet equipped to do so. *"And (the angel) 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. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”⁸And 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.”

If the story ended here it would just be an interesting tale. But that'd be about all it was. But the story didn't end here. Jesus made Himself known to Mary and then to the disciples. He spoke to them. He was alive! Christ is risen...

And see that makes all the difference in the world. To that point Mary couldn't believe what Jesus told her and the disciples prior to His death. He gave them all the "information" they needed to get through the past 3 days. But see information isn't faith. Faith isn't merely information. Faith is a living thing created in us by God through the Word that allows us to trust Him, that allows us to believe the truth and see that everything is the way God said it would be. Faith is the thing which clings to all the Word and promises of Jesus Christ.

Mary stood at the tomb with no faith. She left and she hurried back to the tomb later without having faith. She was so distracted with life, and death, that she didn't have the faith that says Jesus would rise as He said He would.

If we arrive at our tomb without faith then we're in worse shape than Mary was. There's no second chance at your death or at the coming of Christ. We're better off than Mary was because we know how this story ends. Jesus is risen.

Jesus is alive. Jesus ascends to His Father and Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us. Jesus doesn't send us through life unequipped.

Really, He through His Word and through the sacraments is constantly calling us back from our distractions. As surely as He had mercy on Mary and John and Peter in their unbelief He has mercy on you as well. He will not just let life overwhelm you and distract you without a word. He's constantly giving out faith in His Word in all its forms. His desire was to die for you. His desire was for you to know that and believe. His desire is for you to be forgiven and have eternal life. For that purpose He continually comes to us here. He continually enlivens us in His Word equipping us to deal with life while at the same time keeping our focus and faith on Him.

And when you do get to the end of your days, equipped with the faith Christ gives you know this: The fact that He was raised from the dead in His body insures that you too will rise to new life. The tomb is not the end. The grave is transformed into the doorway to life, eternal life. *"For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."*

That is the hope and promise of God to His children. We will not perish but live because Christ did not perish but lives. Let us go forth then into this world and life forgiven and enlivened in Christ. Christ is risen...Amen

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.