

Easter Day B 21

A Sunday School teacher asked her class on the Sunday before Easter if they knew what happened on Easter and why it was so important.

One little girl spoke up saying: "Easter is when the whole family gets together, and you eat turkey and sing about the pilgrims and all that."

"No, that's not it," said the teacher.

"I know what Easter is," a second student responded. "Easter is when you get a tree and decorate it and give gifts to everybody and sing lots of songs."

"Nope, that's not it either," replied the teacher.

Finally a third student spoke up, "Easter is when Jesus was killed, and put in a tomb and left for three days."

"Ah, thank goodness somebody knows" the teacher thought to herself.

But then the student went on: "Then everybody gathers at the tomb and waits to see if Jesus comes out, and if he sees his shadow he has to go back inside and we have six more weeks of winter."

All joking aside, Happy Easter Everyone!! Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Oh come on, I know we aren't gathered together, but I know you can do better than that! Christ is Risen!! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!! We love to shout this phrase of Alleluia! It's been a long time since we could use that word! We loved to celebrate Easter! We celebrate with festivals, easter egg dying, chocolate eggs, and all the other celebratory things. Easter always seems to be a joyous occasion! But our Gospel reading today from Mark is kinda jarring.

We get the usual stone rolled away and the angel proclaiming that Christ was raised from the dead. And what was the response? AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!! They fled from the tomb with terror and amazement and told no one. If you're like me, you probably read that and went, "WHAT?! They told no one!" How is this an Easter Gospel message??

It's not exactly the joy filled Gospel that we expect on Easter Sunday. But perhaps this Gospel is exactly what we need right now. We might not be feeling the same joyous feeling that we normally would for Easter. For over a year now, most folks have not been able to gather together for in-person worship. We have not felt the joy of being together or the swell of emotions when singing together. We might be, in this moment, like those who fled from the tomb in terror and amazement.

Why do you think they fled? Was it because their brains were just overloaded with new and weird information? Was it because they couldn't comprehend what had just happened? Or was it because they were terrified about what this meant for the future? It could be any one of these

reasons, but I think it all boils down to the fact that they weren't prepared to hear that Jesus was raised. They weren't prepared to encounter something new. They didn't know that they would now be the ones to carry on the mission into the world. From now on, they would be forever changed and that is kinda scary.

This begs the question for us, are we ready to hear that Christ is raised from the dead? Are we ready to hear what this message means for us? Are we ready to be changed by this message? Are we ready to carry out the mission. The angel that pronounced this message to them said that Jesus was going ahead of them into Galilee. That Jesus was moving forward into the future and they should do the same. For Jesus wasn't still back in the tomb, Jesus was out in Galilee. For many months now I have heard the phrase, "I just wish we could all go back to normal!" But people of God, I have one thing to tell you, Jesus isn't in the tomb. Jesus is here right now and Jesus has gone ahead of us into the future!

Think about it in this way. If you are driving your car down the street and only look in your rear-view mirror, what is going to happen? You're going to crash. It's the same way in life. If we live our lives thinking always about the past, we will crash.

COVID has most certainly not been fun. Life before COVID looks awfully good to us, but the truth of it is, life will probably never be the same. Sure, we might be able to gather in-person again, but life will never fully be the same. And you know what, that is ok! Because you know what, while COVID has been horrible, it has forced us, as the church, to move forward and think about new ways of being the church.

A lot of us, before COVID, would never have thought about worshiping online. And because we worship online, we can reach even more people. People who might not ever step into a church because they've been hurt, or are home bound, or are not physically near us. They now have the wonderful opportunity to hear the Word of God proclaimed. We have the opportunity to spread the Gospel throughout the whole world in a new way!

If we focus on the past, we miss out on the awesome opportunities that are in front of us in the present. We miss out on seeing the risen Christ in our midst. And we miss out on the opportunities that come across our paths.

We miss out on the opportunity to serve our neighbor who has lost their job due to the pandemic or who has become food insecure due to rising food prices. If we focus on the past, we lose sight of Jesus in our midst.

Jesus is not just in the past. Jesus is not in the tomb. He is with us right now and he is moving forward to love and serve others and God in our communities and world.

Don't look back on what was, look at what is right in front of you and what is ahead of us.

Jesus has gone ahead of us! Jesus is risen! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

So where do we go from here? Will we be like those who fled from the tomb? Will we be afraid and looking back? Or will we be open to the risen Christ's presence in our lives now and walk with him into the future? For all our sake, let us move forward. Jesus is there. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.