

A Holy Disruption

Mark 16:1-8

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I God's statement of barriers removed

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We know from other places in the bible that soon they did regain their composure and DID pass the message along.

But to hear it at first was too much.

The greek reads literally that "they trembled and were `besides themselves.'" In other words, the news was too wonderful and too great to be grasped at once. It blew them away. They struggle to digest it all, and to figure out how to respond.

And that's all very normal. Fear, bewilderment, becoming startled are typical human reactions when something comes along and disrupts the normal pattern of life as we expect to find it.

Would you say that it's fair to suggest that the events which Paul read for us count under the category, "The Unexpected."

It is a huge, holy disruption.

It had been a brutal and terrifying weekend. Jesus was arrested, condemned, tortured and murdered. Feeling terribly vulnerable his close friends had managed to get him buried on the eve of the Sabbath, and then huddled in fear behind a locked door.

Now it is Sunday morning. And they want to complete the proper tasks of burial which had been neglected in the fear and rush of Friday afternoon.

So they gather the proper supplies. And with the first hint of dawn and safety on the roads, they head out to the cemetery.

They aren't thinking too clearly. I mean - who does immediately after the death of a close loved one, especially under desperate circumstances?

It is only when they come close to the tomb, perhaps coming round the corner and see the first graves that the thought hits them – They'll never get into the grave! Impossible.

The tomb of Jesus, like many of the day, was a small cave cut out of the side of a cliff. At the mouth of the cave a large slopping groove was cut. A large boulder was rolled to the edge of the groove and given a push. Once started, it would roll itself against the mouth of the grave and slam into the opening, resting securely against it. Because of the weight of the boulder and the downward slope, it would be extremely difficult to remove. Certainly an impossible task for these few women.

Well, they were this far. Might as well carry on the rest of the way. They do and..... the rest is history.

They discover the incredible event of Easter!

They discover the greatest happening in all of history,

one that defies scientific explanation,

one that - in spite of its oddity - cannot be refuted by historians or scholars,

one that led to the birth of a world religion,

one that has given hope to millions upon millions of otherwise hopeless people.

The women come to the tomb and discover that the stone, that great big stone, that barrier which stood between them and their Jesus, **was gone!** All their worry was for naught. That which they could never do has been already done for them by the angel of God.

And the body of Jesus, previously mangled and drained of life, cold and still - it too **was gone!**

They meet the angel and hear the Easter message.

Their numbing pain and grief are stopped short by the enormous holy disruption.

Now hear me carefully -

This is a disruption that actually sets things straight.

What had happened on the Friday was the first disruption, the dark and ugly one - the disruption of death.

Today - Easter - that disruption, the death disruption, is itself disrupted. Shaken up and kicked to the side!

Shoved to the side just like the angel had shoved the grave stone bolder to the side.

Death's unchallenged strangle hold over creation is disrupted.

The women don't get it all - and leave.

They don't say anything....

...at least, at first they don't....

....because it is all so startling, so strange, almost unbelievably so!

That which they expected is turned upside down.

What was the expected norm is no longer the case.

I mean - well, at one time or another most of you have been to a grave side. You have buried a loved one. The casket lowered. The dirt was replaced. The sod replanted. A huge barrier was there. A cold, morbid, evil barrier. Truly the end of the road. And so it has been ever since the Fall in Paradise. You expect it to stay that way.

Until the events of Easter weekend, when the forces of evil and death on the one side and the Son of God on the other side grappled headlong in the greatest confrontation of history. On Friday it seemed as if death had won. As the women experienced, the earth seemed to have swallowed up their Lord. And it tried to pin Jesus down for the count. But it was unable to hold him for the full three days.

Sunday has come.

JESUS HAS WON!

The cursed forces that have held the cosmos so tightly in their grip since the Fall have been dealt their death blow.

Jesus is alive!

Forever.

And the Bible's promise is that for all who believe in Him the role of death is disrupted, and changed from Master to servant, nothing more than a doorkeeper to the halls of heaven into which all believers will be welcomed by their Saviour.

The horror of the past days had done something else.

It had divided the Master from his followers;

separated Jesus from his friends

shattering that little community.

They had all followed Jesus for three years, but in the dark of the garden called Gethsemane, they had all run away when confronted by the armed mob.

They had deserted Jesus - gone AWOL.

They had watched the crucifixion from a distance.

Now they were huddled together in the upper room back in Jerusalem, the greasy dishes from the Passover meal still possibly lying around.

Were they ashamed of their cowardice that night?

Quite possibly.

But not a thing they could do about it now.

Things just simply are as they are.

Until the Holy Disruption.

And the word of the angel -

"Go tell the disciples he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Perhaps they abandoned him. But he will never abandon them! He calls them to meet with him again. He gives them yet another chance. Jesus, completely victorious, gently begins to gather his scattered and quaking troops. Hope, that seemed completely lost in their fear and their shame, is now rekindled! More than that, it is taken and firmly planted, immovable in the foundation of the resurrection.

Jesus does not quit on quitters. He keeps on seeking us out. He gathers us in. He goes ahead of us, in fact, clearing the way, preparing our life.

Jesus goes to Galilee to prepare the disciples for the rest of their lives and lives' work. Just as He goes ahead of all believers. As a community we can rest secure in this one fact: our Jesus is our living King who takes deep and permanent interest in the work done for him. And when that work falters, when parts of his Church go wrong, when scandal strikes, or apathy threatens to take over, when discouragement sets in, he promises to re-gather his community.

He disrupts our failures, and grants us the grace of new beginnings!

He is going ahead of you into Galilee... he is going ahead of you!

Do you ever have the feeling that your life wanders? Perhaps you or your family's faith has been scattered by the opposition of something in life, perhaps a series of events, perhaps just the busy pace of day-to-day events.

And you look back, and with shock realize that you have slid away from a solid commitment to Jesus and a life of service to him! Perhaps you look back on the past year, since last Easter, or number of years, and you say, "How things have fallen. Where have my priorities gone?"

Then remember the empty tomb. And remember the words of the angel who sat in it. And remember that the Lord who received back to himself those fair-weather friend disciples, and who was able, through the power of his resurrected life, to empower them to do great things for him, is also standing ready, as the Risen Lord Of Life, to receive you back again.

One very personal example of that.

Listen to the angel again - "Go, tell the disciples...

....and Peter....."

Go tell Peter.

He had been the leader of the disciples.

And he - more than all the others - had really let Jesus down.

In full view of Jesus, Peter had denied knowing him.

His name means "*the rock*."

His behaviour was anything but rock solid.

Three times he had denied his Lord. Three times. And Jesus had heard. Jesus had looked at him in a way that pierced him to his soul. And now there was no way of begging forgiveness. It was over. Never would Peter live this down. Never could he face the others. Never could he remember all the good times. The denial blocked everything else out.

Caught forever in the grip of his failure and shame.

Till that failure and shame is disrupted by Easter.

The angel passes on a personal word from Jesus to Peter.

Perhaps you can relate to Peter. For whatever reason, you have done an about-face at one point or another in your life, deliberately turning your back on Jesus. You'd become cynical or bored or busy or just not interested or found it all absurd or.... well, you yourself know the reason best. Maybe it was something that went on for a long time. Maybe it was the faltering for a day or an hour.

Whatever it was you look at it and you feel a deep heaviness inside. It's not right. Not good. You know it, feel bad about it, but it doesn't go.

Then listen to the words of Mark 16: "Go tell the disciples.... **AND PETER.**" There is a special message of love and a new start for the one who has been so badly estranged. "Go tell Peter." There is the tremendous gathering love of Jesus. Nothing can separate us from him.

Sin may disrupt it.

But the great and holy love of Jesus disrupts the disruption.

Sin is powerful, but Jesus is even more powerful.

"Go, tell Peter."

This is a very personal message for a very particular individual.
Which is very much how the Saviour operates.

While our eyes see the far-off woods, but not the individual trees; and while we see a seething mass of humanity in a crowd, but never the individual persons, Jesus the Risen Christ never loses that perspective.

Yes, He sees the millions and the billions.

And, yes, he sees the couple hundred sitting here today.

But he also sees inside the person and heart of each individual.

Each separately has a place in his mind and heart.

"Go, tell Peter."

To each of us he says, "I know you by name." And as clearly and gently as the message was given to Peter it now comes to each of us on this morning of New Life.

There is no barrier too large.

There is no sin too great.

Nothing can disrupt His desire for a personal relationship with each one of us! And so, on this Easter morning, I invite you to respond. To say "YES" to His extended hand.

CONCLUSION

From best accounts the gospel of Mark ends with verse 8 - "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."

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The Greek reads literally that "they trembled and were `besides themselves.'" In other words, the news was too wonderful and too great to be grasped at once. It blew them away. They struggle to digest it all, and to figure out how to respond.

And that's all very normal. Fear, bewilderment, becoming startled are typical human reactions when faced with things we aren't expecting.

And so it is with the events of Easter. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is something that seems so implausible, irrational, and unlikely! And that this resurrection can smash down any barriers that keep us from eternal life with Almighty God and that keep us from making a new start on relationship with him today is almost too much to hope.

Nonetheless it is so.

And we must believe it.

And startled though we may be, we MUST respond.

How can we do otherwise?

Remember, Jesus has called us.

Let's not keep him waiting!

