

Mark 16:1-8

“And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb” (vs. 2). We’ve all been there. We have all made that journey. We’ve been to the tomb; to the grave of a loved one. With heavy feet these women walked; slowly, eyes downward, hearts filled with sadness. They believed. They believed they would see Jesus again...in heaven one day. But that belief did not lighten their steps.

Nor does it lighten ours. We have sorrow now. We have sadness today. Tomorrow will be bright, but when death brings us to the tomb, the tears flow. Must we wait for heaven to have joy? Can we not have it now? Or must our entire life be, in a sense, a slow, heavy journey to the grave?

No, my friends. Today is Easter. Soon, though perhaps not too soon, the final Easter will dawn. But even now, this day in your life, there is Easter joy, and it is for you. This joy is in the message of the angel.

Three verbs he gives to the women. Three commands he gives to us. *“See...go...tell.” “See the place where they laid Him...Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you.”*

And they do. They see. They behold. They take it all in. Everything is as it was on Friday, except for one thing: Jesus is not there. *“He has risen!”* says the angel, *“just as He told you.”*

Yes, He did. Jesus told His disciples that He would rise from the dead...and on the third day. And so did the prophets tell them. *“On this mountain,”* Isaiah writes, *“He will swallow up death forever.”* *“I know that my Redeemer lives!”* cries Job. The prophets all testify. Death will be defeated, and Jesus will do it. Not by using an army of angels. By dying Himself, and by rising again.

The women saw. They did as the angel commanded. *“See the place.”* And so do you. For every time you come to God’s house you see with eyes of faith. You see with your ears. You behold what the women beheld. The body of Jesus is not there, but here. Here you behold the living Christ. You see Him as He wants to be seen: in the good news you hear, and in the Sacraments you receive.

“Go,” says the angel. The second verb; the second command. And the women did. *“They went out...from the tomb.”* Their place was not within the tomb; it was out in the world. And so is ours. We are buried with Christ in our baptism, but we do not stay buried. We rise with Him in baptism. We rise to live the new life; a life of joy, and hope, and assurance.

But this is a struggle. These women did go as the angel commanded, but they went in fear. *“Trembling and astonishment had seized them.”* And so often that is how we go through life. We do not rise above our troubles; we let them bury us. We live as if we have no joy and no hope. We live as if Christ has not been raised from the dead. And if He is not raised, neither are we. Then our baptism means nothing. Then the Sacrament on the altar is mere bread and wine. Then even heaven is a hope we wish for, and not something of which we have assurance.

This isn't what the angel meant in saying, "Go." But rather, Go in peace...Go in confidence...Go as those who believe, not in a dead Jesus, but in a living Lord Jesus.

But we cannot go unless we see. We cannot live the risen life in Christ if we do not behold Christ in His words to us and in His Sacraments for us. Sunday morning sets the tone for the week. If we do not see Jesus in Word and in Sacrament, Monday through Saturday will hardly be days in which Jesus will be seen in us. But when we behold the risen Christ, we go out filled with Christ, and ready to face the struggles that Monday through Saturday will bring.

"Tell," says the angel. The third verb; the third command. And the women did, but not at first. "They said nothing to anyone," it says. Why not? "They were afraid." Are we afraid? Are we afraid of what others will think? Are we afraid of looking like Christians in a non-Christian society? Are we afraid of offending people, even our loved ones, if we speak of Christ to them?

Peter was afraid; afraid he had lost his Lord forever. He had denied Him three times. And he went out and wept bitterly. Could he be forgiven? Could he have peace in his heart again and joy in his life? "Tell," says the angel to the women, "tell (Jesus') disciples **and Peter!**" Tell Peter that Jesus is risen. Go and find that man and give him the good news. He needs to hear it.

And so do we. Before you tell others of the resurrection, God has something He wants to tell you. Your Savior lives! He died for you, and now He lives for you. God accepts His sacrifice made on your behalf. Jesus' Himself was the payment for your sin...all of it. Right now, through this humble mouthpiece, God tells you that your sins are forgiven.

Are you like Peter? Did you deny your Lord? You are forgiven. Are you a repeat offender? Do you fall into the same sin again and again? You are forgiven of it. It cannot keep you away from Jesus. You are buried with Christ and raised with Him in baptism. Your sin has no power over you. He who forgives you - you belong to Him now.

"Tell." God tells you that all is well. There is forgiveness for you. There is joy for you. There is hope for you. Right now. You do not need to wait for heaven. Today God forgives you. Today He gives you joy. And today He assures you that everything Jesus did, He did for you. He is your Savior. And His Easter victory is reason for you to have hope. So tell others of the hope you have. Tell others by how you live.

This is Easter! Come and see the living Lord. Go out in confidence. And tell of all that God has done for you. "He is risen!" "He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" Amen.