## Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, 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. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

In this spare account of the resurrection there are two words that I hadn't really noticed before. Three women, two named Mary and one named Salome, bring spices to the tomb of Jesus in order to anoint his dead body. Their heartbeats quicken when they see that the heavy stone sealing the tomb has been moved. When they go into the tomb a young man who is definitely not Jesus is seated as if he has been waiting for them. The man tells them not to be alarmed, that Jesus has been raised from the dead. As if that in itself is not reason for alarm! Then the man gives the women a task, one so important that every generation to follow will be imprinted with their proclamation. Though terror silences them momentarily, we know that the women eventually do speak of what has happened, for that is how we know the good news of this day. This is to be the first link in the chain of resurrection tidings: “Go, tell his disciples *and Peter*.”

It's the “*and Peter*” part that has escaped my attention all these years. The angel has spoken of Peter as if he is not one of the disciples anymore. And, in a way, he isn't. Peter has done this himself, has separated himself from the others and from Jesus by his shameful behavior. Peter, one of Jesus' dearest friends, has betrayed Jesus in the worst possible way, by renouncing his relationship with Jesus. Peter has no one to blame but himself when he finds himself outside of Jesus' inner circle. And that's where he would have stayed, except for one thing. Resurrection! Resurrection is a game changer. A life changer. A world changer. Resurrection rewrites all the rules. Peter's life is turned upside down for the sake of Christ, who dies and is raised from the dead for him.

The risen one, who has every right to walk away from Peter and his deadly betrayal, does the opposite. Jesus forgives Peter and restores his relationship with Jesus and with his fellow disciples. When death is all around him, Jesus grants Peter new life. This is what resurrection is all about: forgiveness, hope and restoration all through the new life born in Peter and in all of us this day. This is how much Jesus loves Peter: he uses his resurrection power to pull Peter back into the fold, bring him back by his side where Peter has always belonged.

*And Peter.* You know, Peter is not the only one to separate himself from Jesus by his meaningless promises and predictable betrayal. You and I have done it, too. The sins of self-absorption, callousness and greed have put a gulf between us and the one who longs for us. We feel shame and even disgust because of our actions or lack of them. We know better. We know that Jesus calls us to think more of others than ourselves, to care for those who need our care, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to distrust those who claim to hold the world's power. And yet we stray, we disobey, we walk away, we give way our allegiance. Sitting here today, we may identify with Peter. We may consider ourselves outside Jesus' inner circle, maybe even that we do not belong here. How does Jesus respond to us, to our rejection of him? Not by rejecting us. Not with banishment to some outer darkness forever, but with resurrection! The new life coursing through Jesus' veins courses through us, too. We are showered with forgiveness, washed in love's cleansing waters, graced with shimmering new life. Our relationship with God is restored. We are given new identities. On this day that the world claims belongs to fools, God's foolish power is on the loose among us. All that we believe is strength is toppled by his weakness. All our wisdom is toppled by his foolishness. And we are never the same again. What we feared was dead is alive with possibility: Our relationship with Jesus. Our relationships with one another. Our relationship to the world God has given us: the beautiful creation entrusted to our care and God's beloved children entrusted to our love.

*And Peter. And you. And me.* The great good news of resurrection is alive again in us, in everyone who thinks they do not deserve it. We're right - we don't deserve it, not a one of us. That's what makes this day so upside down, so foolishly alive, so brimming with grace and love, Resurrection is a game changer for us all. And today it makes us all April fools.

Amen.

*Easter B*

*April 1, 2018*

*Floyd-Willis Lutheran Parish*

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