

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 4, 2021

RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, EASTER DAY

On the Other Side of Fear

The very last verse of this morning's gospel comprises what scholars believe to be the original ending of Mark. Somewhat alarmingly, the final words are "they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). If you crack open your Bible today, you'll see a few other paragraphs and endings beyond this verse; however, Mark 16:8 is thought to have been the original end to the book.

As people who are used to greeting Easter morning with flowers, banners, trumpets, and boisterous hymns, this original ending to Mark, filled with fear and silence, isn't quite what we expect to find at the empty tomb! The end of Mark's Easter story can feel disquieting; maybe that's why a faithful person added another ending or two.

Fear and silence are hallmarks of human life. Anyone who says they have never been afraid is either living under a rock or probably not sharing the full truth of their experience of things. As vulnerable human creatures, we are susceptible to fear, which can cascade into silence at our worst when we are most frightened. That is exactly where we meet the disciples today.

Yet someone, sometime, somewhere, had to have said something, or else we would not be here worshiping at Easter. At some point joy crept up and leapt over the disciples' terror and paralysis. At some point the words were blurted out and released into the air with gladness: "Christ is risen, alleluia!"

Today, we enter the story on the other side of fear and silence. Someone among those disciples did indeed proclaim the truth: Christ is risen! We can rest assured knowing that despair and death don't have the last word. Drawn into the resurrection life of Jesus, we are invited to take part in this movement of God, shouting with loud praise, "Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

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