

“Go and Tell”

1 Corinthians 15:1-20 • Mark 16:1-8

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • April 17, 2022

A few weeks ago the National Retail Federation conducted an extensive survey of over 8,000 people and found that 80% of Americans plan to celebrate Easter this year, spending nearly \$21 billion dollars in the process. That sounds like good news, right? Not so fast. They also found that only 37% planned to attend a worship service as part of their Easter celebration. It seems that most Americans are confused about what Easter is all about.

It's understandable, I guess. Easter is one of those holidays where things get kind of fuzzy for us. The story is so familiar. We've heard it over and over again. Most people know it has something to do with Jesus coming out of the tomb early in the morning...to hide eggs...and if he sees his shadow there's six more weeks of winter. Or something like that.

But the truth is that for the last two thousand years there's one thing that's been clear to millions upon millions of Christians, and it's this: The Easter event, the resurrection of Jesus, is the most important event in the history of the world. Nothing in history has changed our world as much as this. To put it bluntly, “There is no Christian faith without the resurrection.” This is what the Apostle Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 15: “If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” Jesus being raised from death changes everything.

As one theologian said: “The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.”

Throughout the season of Lent we have been traveling together with Jesus and his disciples along the road to the cross. Each Sunday we made a stop along that road as Jesus showed us who he is, what was going to happen to him, and what he wants us to do. Then on Maundy Thursday we reached the end of the road, so to

speaking, with the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. But the good news of Easter is that Jesus' death was not the end of the road. It's just that nobody expected the Resurrection.

Without the Resurrection, however, the life and death of Jesus are just overwhelmingly tragic events. But with the Resurrection, Jesus proves that He is the Son of God. The gospel of Mark starts out, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The Good News about Jesus is that God, by the resurrection of Jesus, defeated sin and death! Everything in the Gospel of Mark points forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

As we go through life, all of us operate with expectations about how things are around us so that even when things aren't as we expected we don't realize it right away. Our brains are still operating out of our expectations. Mark's gospel tells us that the women come to the tomb expecting one thing – they expect to pour perfume on Jesus' body – and they encounter something else – an angel who tells them that Jesus has been raised. But for now, they are not able to make any sense out of it.

As we heard on Thursday evening, after Jesus died on the cross his body was wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in a tomb that had been cut out of a rock hillside. A large stone was rolled against the entrance, sealing it closed and the last thing we're told is that the two Marys saw where he was laid. That's important because they're the ones who are going to the tomb on that first Easter morning. They are eyewitnesses that Jesus' body was placed in the tomb and the stone rolled in place.

So the first thing I want to talk about is *the Stone*. We're told that the stone was “very large.” The women were rightfully concerned about how they were going to get into the tomb. Verse 3 says that as they were walking they discussed the problem of moving this large stone.

You and I do the same thing. As we go through life, we get caught up worrying about

how we're going to get the big "stones" of life – earthly obstacles – moved that we forget that God is able to move them easily. Maybe you've come here today worried about something when you really need to give it to God. The women were most concerned about moving the stone because their understanding of Jesus was too small. When they are confronted with the power of God, they are afraid and confused.

That brings me to the second point I want to make today, *The Surprise*. The women clearly were not expecting Jesus to be raised from the dead. They came to the tomb with perfumed oils to pour on his body as an expression of love. They certainly would not have gone out the evening before and bought those expensive spices if they expected Jesus to be alive when they got there. The Resurrection is a surprise to them.

The truth is, the Resurrection is a surprise to all of us. God has defeated death and has given us new life. Eternal life. You and I, as followers of Jesus, get to participate in His resurrection. But this new life is not just something we get in the future after we die. It begins right now, from the moment you first have faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. God tells us in His Word that the penalty for sin is death. Apart from Christ every one of us is dead spiritually. But Jesus conquered death for us and we get to live forever with him. The realization of what Jesus did for us always comes as a surprise. It catches us off guard and we are overwhelmed by His unconditional forgiveness and love for us.

We see that surprising forgiveness in verse 7. The angel tells the women to go tell the disciples that Jesus is going before them to Galilee where they will see him. The same disciples who denied knowing Jesus and abandoned him to face

execution alone are now forgiven. They are called to again to follow Jesus. Their failures are not the end of the road. God still has plans for them. Your failures are not the end of God's plans for you.

It doesn't matter what you have done in the past or that maybe you haven't followed Jesus the way you should. Today he offers you a new beginning. Today Christ says to each one of us, "follow me." But following Christ also involves some responsibilities.

And that brings me to the third thing I want you to get from this passage this Easter, *the Sending*. The angel tells the women to *go and tell*. God is calling each one of you to share the good news of the risen Jesus with others. Being a follower of Jesus is not primarily about what we get out of it. We are not here to consume religious services and then go back to our regularly scheduled life. Our mission as Christians is to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God and to tell others about the power of Jesus over sin and death. Remember our mission statement: *Living* to know Christ and to make Christ known.

The funny thing in this passage is that the angel told the women to go and tell, but instead it says they go out afraid. The passage ends by saying, "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." What about you? The stone has been rolled away. The tomb is empty. The Savior is risen. Will you trust Him? Will you choose to follow Him? Will you let Him change your life? Will you worship him even when it's not Easter? Jesus is risen. Go and tell?

Amen.