

Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006  
Mark 16:1-8  
Pr. Tom Schoenherr  
6:30 Sunrise, and 11:00 services

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! There are Christians gathered for worship here and around the world, and especially in Iraq, Iran, China, Russia, and the Sudan of Africa who are staking their lives on the truth of those words, for it is that promise that changes lives. It is Christ alive who brings us from darkness to light, from death to life. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our natural expectation is that dead people stay dead and buried, and that deserters, like the disciples, become outcasts. On Easter the Good News for us is that God reverses those expectations and changes our understanding of reality.

The women came to the tomb wondering how they will roll away the stone that covers the opening. What they find is that the stone is already moved, and a young man in white who says to them, but also to us, the listeners and readers of this story, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here! See the place where they laid him. But go; tell the disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him as he told you.”

But the women, overcome with fear and astonishment, don't tell anyone. We are left wondering what will happen. We were hoping that the women would do the right thing for Jesus. They get the message but they fail to tell anyone. The disciples fail to understand Jesus and his mission. They are hiding.

What happens when we fail God? If Jesus is alive and we failed to tell others, then Jesus may as well be dead and we are left in our failure and fear.

We all fail at times and it is into times like this when we, like the women, are confused, astonished and immobilized by fear, that Easter happens.

We live in a Good Friday world where great fear, division between races and cultures, betrayal, terror and death seem to have won the day. We see this evident in the war in Iraq, possible nuclear conflict with Iran, division of culture and races and law over the immigration crisis, and we see it in the war going on in Sudan. We know that fear when the doctor tells us the news we don't want to hear; when depression seems to spiral us more deeply into darkness and fear; when we get a pink slip telling us we are no longer needed at the place where we work; when we know the darkness of the death of a loved one, or the end of our marriage. We know in the pit of our stomachs the feeling of failure and the reality of our sin.

It is into this world of confusion that we need the message of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, that dead people don't stay dead and buried, and that people like us and the

disciples and the women who run away and fail, are not rejected, but are invited back into a relationship with Jesus. He does not fail us.

Jesus is let loose in the world and he is going before us into the places of conflict and fear to bring new life and hope to people. We believe and trust the promise that Jesus is there already in our fight against cancer and disease; that he is there in the chemo and radiation treatment rooms. Jesus is already there in the midst of the terror and violence in Iraq, and the threatening dangers of nuclear conflict with Iran. Jesus is there working to heal the divisions between races and cultures in our city. Jesus is already there bringing light to the dark and fearful places of our lives.

The Easter story is still going on. Where will we find Jesus alive in our lives today or next week? What a gift it is that the message that Jesus Christ lives and loves and leads us in the mission of healing the whole world, is the Good News we get to tell everyone.

Archbishop Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, traveled to Darfur, Sudan, Africa this Lenten season. He went to be with people who are living in a Good Friday world of fear for their lives, feeling abandoned by the rest of the world. When he led a Holy Communion service, he expected sadness and disillusionment, but, even though it was Lent these people were singing "Alleluias". They believe that God is there in the depths of what they are enduring, if the rest of the world has forgotten them, Jesus will not fail them. Living in the light of the Easter Gospel they have hope of new life coming from the darkness and death all around them. Archbishop Williams said, "God is always ahead of us, moving into the places of fear and darkness to bring hope and victory from suffering, chaos and pain."

It is good for us to come to the Table of the Lord and here to be in awe, amazed and astonished that in simple bread and wine, Jesus Christ is present with His Body and Blood. He takes our failure and our sin and returns to us a promise that he will not fail us. He gives us healing and forgiving love.

There are many things in our lives that astonish us, make us tremble, make us afraid, and make us want to run. The Easter Good News is that Jesus is already in those places bring hope, new life and peace. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we follow where Jesus leads us into loving the world as He has first loved us. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.