**Mark 16:1-8**

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. **2** And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. **3** And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” **4** And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back— it was very large. **5** And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. **6** And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

**“Rolling Away Fear”**

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Amen. Easter celebrates how surprise is the spice of life. Marriage proposals would not be so stunning if there was no waiting to pop that question. Pregnancy would not be so glorious if every aspect of conception could be controlled. Sports would be boring if the winning team was just a matter of raw calculation. As one author puts it, “[We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen.](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/you_have_to_take_risks-we_will_only_understand/151615.html)”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Of course, that is the point of Easter and the joy it shares. The surprise is that only God counted on the resurrection of Jesus. Pontius Pilate didn’t care about some crucified king as he slept in on Sunday morning. Jewish leaders were secure over the sealed tomb of a false messiah they put to shame. The disciples had no room for anything else, but a one-way ticket to despair. Matter a fact, for all the unexpected things of life. Jesus seems to be at the bottom of the list for a whole sinful world.

There is something unexpected in what we hear from St. Mark on the resurrection. Everything else is right with the women, an open tomb and the angel, but the big part is missing. No one “sees” Jesus. The resurrection must be more than seeing, but belief in what God says. St. Mark shows women fleeing from the tomb focused on the angel’s announcement, “…He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” Jesus’ death and resurrection has rolled away all fear so we are free to be faithful to His Word.

If one thing is certain, the women coming to the tomb were dedicated. They had stood in the messiness of Jesus’ crucifixion to the very end. They went home to observe what had to be the dreariest Sabbath Day rest ever in their life. Now they were coming back to finish the job in caring for Jesus’ body at the tomb. Yet, such love no matter how committed it was fell short. The haunting question over the stone in front of the tomb proved one thing. Their own strength was insufficient to say the least.

Faithfulness is never enough to silence all that we fear. Doing your duty is good for life. Yet, Jesus’ death shows the Laws judgment against our works. There are also bigger stones rolled in the way. Fear falls on us from terrorism as it puts Christians to death without any remorse. Our own society continues to push religion out of the public square with Christianity specifically under attack. The Devil pummels us with questions over guilt, uncertainty, and hopelessness to cut faithfulness off from Jesus and so we fail.

The stone rolled away from the tomb became an invitation to enter. Those women who went in saw emptiness and that could never give faith. An angel filling the void had to remove fear from consuming them. The proclamation of Christ had to ring out. This day belonged to Him. “He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.” The resurrection of Jesus is the, “it ain’t over tills its over” part of the Gospel. What happened at the cross was faithfulness from God, perfect sacrifice to cover sin, and salvation won for all.

God rolls away fear still by giving a more faithful Word to us. The unexpected resurrection of Jesus turns us back to what we expect, Scripture. God reveals the promises of the Gospel by what He says and only faith receives the gifts. Jesus the Word become flesh, the Word that died on the cross, the Word risen from the dead is faithful. He has proven that, “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword…” (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus cuts down all guilt and shame of sin with words of forgiveness. He demolishes death with the Word of baptism into His life that cannot die. He slices through the Devil’s lies with Words of truth and love that saves.

When the women departed from that empty tomb, they were free to expect the unexpected. Even if they did not yet see Jesus the promise was faithful, “He is going before you to Galilee.” The Lord of life was already ahead of their lives. He was already victoriously making a way for His Gospel to go out the ends of the earth. Whatever their fearful reservation were at first to not speak. We know it did not last long. Jesus would reveal Himself to prove God’s Word stands and so they could speak without fear.

We are free to be faithful for Jesus goes before us. You might think we are at a loss today compared to those that actually saw Jesus. There is always that desire to go back to the “good old days.” The Lord knows we need His presence and so His Word and Sacrament go before us. Christ gladly comes to remove all doubt and fear. It is so we can speak and act with Him in our lives. There is much to face today and it calls for unexpected faithfulness. We cannot hide as if the truth to speak is not in the Word or act as if God does not seek to show mercy.

In every one of your lives whatever troubles, burdens, and opportunities, “fear not.” Christ goes before you as He does His whole Church. The same faithfulness as with saints in ages past is present today. Not even Hell itself could keep out the victorious One from parading around His triumph by the cross. Jesus has rolled away all fear so we are free to be faithful to His Word. Amen. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia. Amen.

1. http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/unexpected/2.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)