**Mark 16:1-8 (ESV)**

**1**  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.

**“The Glory of Easter”**

Dear brothers and sisters redeemed by the precious death of the Savior Jesus. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! What an wonderful greeting to hear among the baptized children of God. It tells comfort to the broken hearted. It speaks up against the sorrows of death. It pronounces joy based only on Jesus. We say it here today on this Easter Sunday that, “Christ is risen!” and rightly so. Yet, outside of where the Word is allowed to be publicly preached in the church. You know these words are hard to speak not only in society, but also among family. Some may even classify it as being a kind of hate speech or prejudice to others. Such an atmosphere felt now at the present brings us more in line with those on that first Easter morning.

The resurrection account as recorded by St. Mark drives home the point for proclaiming the Gospel. Eyes need to see what God’s Word of salvation freely speaks for sinners. In a Roman world ruled by skepticism there had to be visible proof for everything. A person’s word was not good enough and so St. Mark makes it clear about the women. They saw the stone rolled away, they saw a young man sitting, they saw the place where Jesus had laid, and they were going to see in Him in Galilee. To question the resurrection of Jesus is to question His sacrifice on the cross and finally it is to question His very life and birth as well. It all fits together this one salvation in Jesus Christ. Freedom of speech dwindles by doubt and deception, but we still have this promise. The glory of Easter is that God freely speaks by the risen body and blood of Jesus.

Where men sealed the tomb in the darkness of Good Friday, the women on Easter morning arose to a creation already praising Christ its creator. We heard, “And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.” With each of their steps, the growing light of creation was slowly uncovering the mystery right before the eyes of these women. St. Augustine notes, “For as the day breaks, what remains of the darkness passes away just in proportion as the sun continues to rise” (229). Things were not going to get worse only better as creation glorified the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The truth was no longer a secret, but shared with these women. They were to see without a doubt the stone rolled away from the tomb celebrated victory for creation.

Sinful humanity is trying again to roll the stone back over God’s love for creation and darken the picture. However, there was only one Good Friday, one day of death, and that is not today. The waters of baptism promise, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:1.7) Creation praises the God who humbled Himself to overcome a fallen world. The Word that created all things is the Word become flesh promising to free creation itself. St. Paul tells us, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:20-21). Praise is not over a world still stuck with graves sealed and dealing with dark days. It is over Christ whose tomb is empty and stone rolled away to welcome us into His eternal day. God freely speaks the glory of Easter in the risen body and blood of Jesus.

After the women got past the praise of creation, they saw the celebration of heaven sitting inside. When they entered the tomb, the sight was more than confusing, but distressing. It moved the angel to proclaim, “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.” What he shared with the women was forgiveness by means of which their eyes would not have forgotten. It focused upon the crucifixion of Jesus and His love for sinners. The only difference now was to hear the justifying Savior that the arose just for them. This pure absolution, hope, and forgiveness turned alarm into an answer of celebration. He said, “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.” Jesus was already on the move ahead of them. Already the Word was fearlessly making a way in this world for His beloved disciples.

The announcement of the resurrection is to trust in the crucified Jesus just as the angel told the women. Easter and Good Friday go hand in hand. Just as true faith must hear God’s Word and trust it. The victory going before us cannot be a faith apart from Jesus faithfully being Savior. In other words, His forgiveness spoken is good, His Word proclaimed is truth, and His resurrection confirms what the cross accomplishes in our life. There is no angel before our eyes, but St. Paul puts it this way, “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain.” We must repent of what alarms us just like the women to hear better words of forgiveness. Likewise, there is no place for second-guessing this Savior. He already goes before us. The glory of Easter is that God freely speaks by the risen body and blood of Jesus.

To close out Easter seems anticlimactic, even demeaning, when you read that last verse of St. Mark. “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.” Oh yes, sinful fear was suppressing true faith from confessing the glory of Easter. Matter a fact, none of the accounts of the resurrection in St. Mark end with anyone boldly saying, “Christ is risen!” Instead, this Gospel writer gives a special place to the glory of Easter. It belongs to Jesus, God’s Son, alone. His first words noted after the resurrection end up being the last recorded in St. Mark, but it is what broke the fears of the disciples to speak faithfully. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Our fears are no less troubling then on that first Easter. This is true especially when saying, “Christ is risen!” can have a label of hate speech or prejudice. No wonder the glory of Easter always goes to Jesus the faithful Savior of the cross. He presents the victory over sin, death, the Devil by revealing His true body and blood. The promise of forgiveness, life and salvation goes before us in the sacrament, for it is Jesus. Humbly He greets His disciples in bread and wine. It is not to decrease faith, but to cast out fear that silences a good confession of His Name. Freedom of speech is dwindling it seems, but an eternal light has arisen to remove the darkness. Luther declares, “A Christian must accustom himself to think about Christ’s victory…the victory in which everything has already been accomplished and in which we have everything we should have. Henceforth we live only to spread among other people the news of what Christ has achieved” (Study Bible 1697). And if we cannot have confidence such as this, there is still one certainty for the Church throughout all ages. The glory of Easter is that God freely speaks by the risen body and blood of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! Amen.