

Resurrection Living  
Acts 10.34-43 and Mark 16.1-8  
April 1, 2018  
Easter 1B  
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St. Charles Ave. Baptist Church

We want some pageantry this morning. We don't just want a stone rolled away, we want choirs of angels and trumpets and confirmation that we're putting our hope in the right guy. What if the story ends right there in Mark 16.8a? The oldest manuscripts suggest that's how Mark closed it out before someone came along and added a more Resurrectiony ending: "They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Mark's resurrection gives us no Jesus and no tidy ending; just a young man, dressed in white, with a teaser of a story. What does this man say? He is not here. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. It seems the second the stone was rolled away, Jesus was immediately on his way to Galilee. Immediately, after all, is important to Mark.

It's Mark's gospel that begins not with birth but with baptism, and then immediately Jesus being compelled or driven into wilderness. As he emerges for the next phase of his work, he invites others to join him, and immediately they leave their nets and boats and at least one father standing on deck holding it all. Because when the Spirit is moving and compelling and inviting folks to come on, *immediately* seems to be the best response.

This immediately going ahead, moving on, going to the next spot, continuing the work, finding the people, healing and eating and blessing is what Jesus is always doing. Will Willimon writes, "Faith, when it comes down to it, is our often breathless attempt to keep up with the redemptive activity of God, to keep asking ourselves, 'What is God doing, where on earth is God going now?'"<sup>1</sup> There is a forward movement in the story of scripture and in the story of our lives—God is forever going ahead of us. The way of God keeps moving on, moving forward, moving toward the point at which the stuff of our world and the stuff of God's imagination merge and no longer travel divergent paths but sync as one.

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<sup>1</sup> Will Willimon, *Interpretation: Acts*, p. 99

Funny enough, the consequence of resurrection is being alive! If death doesn't have the last word, then life continues. And not a static, sitting on a bench, observing the passersby and waiting to be noticed life but a wildly unpredictable, up and down, persistently alive life.

Maybe I will write a book one day called *What We Got Wrong in the Church*. I feel like the list of sermons I have preached in this category is already extensive. What we got wrong about resurrection is that we taught it as a singular, historical event. We wanted to mark it on our calendars: this is when Jesus was born, this is when Jesus was raised from the dead, and now we wait for Jesus to come again. We taught resurrection as having only to do with heaven and nothing to do with earth. We taught it as having everything to do with later and practically nothing to do with now. We got it wrong.

Because the story of resurrection, like every other Christ story, is showing us what this very good life is and just how much living that life to the full really matters. As with the story of the whole of scripture, we are invited to chase after, to join in, to meet up with God as the *next* thing emerges. God isn't sitting on a bench waiting to be discovered anymore than Jesus was, in Mark's story. Lance Pape notes, "The resurrected Lord has no intention of giving us time to sit around pondering whether we believe in this sort of thing or not."<sup>2</sup> He's already gone ahead.

Pape also acknowledges this likely isn't the Jesus we're after right now. Rather, "[a]fter a long season of Lenten preparation, we are ready to get a good hold on our resurrected Jesus and settle down for a bit, but Mark does not make him available for us." In John's telling (20.17), Mary sees Jesus and supposes him to be a gardener. When she realizes who he is, she runs and grabs him, but Jesus tells her, "Do not hold onto me." In Mark's gospel, no one even has that chance. Jesus is already going ahead to Galilee.

Already filled with terror and amazement, how in the world are they supposed to find him? How will they know what it means to be on the way to Jesus; to be on the way of Jesus? They'll know because they've been there with him before. They know the way already because they have walked this way with him before. They know where to look for him because they know how to get there together. In the places of the most ignored corner of suffering in town, he'll be the one sitting alongside the one everyone else walks a wide circle around. In the old teaching that falls flat and produces more death than life, he'll be the one blowing away the cobwebs and flinging the curtains open for new light to shine on it. When bread is broken and wine is poured, where

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<sup>2</sup> Lance Pape, [workingpreacher.com](http://workingpreacher.com), April 5, 2015

neighbors have gathered as friends, when tables are long and wide and curving and seemingly packed corner to corner, he'll be the one pulling out another chair to make room for one more. They know what he has gone ahead to do because they know him.

Pape adds, "So now, at Easter, this summons to Galilee is an invitation to rethink it all, to reappraise the whole story in light of its ending...But if we can recover from the shock, there is nothing for it but to do as we are told and head back to Galilee -- back to the site of his ministry among us, back out into the world where we are promised that he has gone ahead of us."

I suspect you know this place in your life—the moment when terror and amazement seize us. When we are tempted to say nothing to anyone and go off in fear, Mark wants us to understand what it means to live in the light of resurrection. You know death. Maybe it's facing real death and real loss and the waves of grief in releasing someone you didn't want to release. Or maybe the metaphor is so real for you that it may as well be literal. Our lives are complicated and beautiful. Our capacity to love is brutal and magical. We know terror. We know amazement. We know what it feels like to go off in fear and have no idea where will we go next or how we will get there or what will we do.

Resurrection living tells us: You are not alone in your fear and amazement. He is already going ahead of you. He has shown you this way before. You will know in your being what the path is. You know where to step next not because it is logical but because love compels you. See, that is the way he has not only shown you but commanded you. I am with you always, he promised. Feel that promise deep in your bones this morning. Let the fear wash away as the comprehensive love of God draws you back onto the path—to Galilee, or Memphis, or using your body and your privilege to get in the way of deportations, or sitting in solidarity with formerly incarcerated women who are telling their stories to dismantle a system of oppression, or the walk you'll take with a neighbor, or pulling out a chair for one more at your table as you break bread and share wine. We live this out. We don't sit on a bench and watch it. The love of God, with the Spirit's wind at our backs, draws us back onto the Jesus path today.

To that, Jan Richardson adds, "This day, this empty tomb: this has been our destination all this time. But we see, with Mary Magdalene, that this is not a place to stop. This is not the end toward which we have been traveling. This is the beginning."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://paintedprayerbook.com>

**Risen** (For Easter Day)  
by Jan Richardson

If you are looking  
for a blessing,  
do not linger  
here.

Here  
is only  
emptiness,  
a hollow,  
a husk  
where a blessing  
used to be.

This blessing  
was not content  
in its confinement.

It could not abide  
its isolation,  
the unrelenting silence,  
the pressing stench  
of death.

So if it is  
a blessing  
you seek,  
open your own  
mouth.

Fill your lungs  
with the air  
this new  
morning brings

and then  
release it  
with a cry.

Hear how the blessing  
breaks forth  
in your own voice,

how your own lips  
form every word  
you never dreamed  
to say.

See how the blessing  
circles back again,  
wanting you to  
repeat it,  
but louder,

how it draws you,  
pulls you,  
sends you  
to proclaim  
its only word:

Risen.  
Risen.  
Risen.