

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**  
**Title: Encountering God and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in**  
**Diverse Experiences**  
**Lesson: Mark 16:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

<sup>5</sup> When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, <sup>6</sup> but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth,<sup>Ⓜ</sup> who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. <sup>7</sup> Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

<sup>8</sup> The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

Happy Easter!

Last week was Holy Week, also known as Passion Week. It began with Palm Sunday, and we spent the week reflecting and praying on the resurrection of Christ.

On Thursday, we held a Maundy Thursday service. Fortunately, this time the water temperature was just right during the hand washing, so I didn't receive any complaints about it.

On Friday, we had a Good Friday Service. Our proud Methodist Bell Choir performed "Tis Midnight, and on Olive's Brow" at the ecumenical service in Clear Lake.

And yesterday was the last day of Lent, Holy Saturday. My family and I participated in an Egg Hunt Event held at Emerald Park. We were able to meet some parishioners there. And once again, there was a raffle for bicycles. We eagerly placed our raffle tickets in the basket of the bike we hoped to win, waiting and waiting. Unfortunately, we didn't win the bicycle, but my

son was thrilled to receive a gift basket prepared for all the children who attended the event.

And this early morning, from the Youth Sunrise Service, we heard the Tale of Three Trees. We are grateful for the efforts and time put in by the children and teachers who prepared this worship.

Mark 16 tells the story of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus was crucified on Friday and his body was entombed in a tomb. In Judaism, each week from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday is the Sabbath. For Jews, the Sabbath is a day of rest, as it is a commandment from God, and they are not to engage in any labor during the Sabbath. Since Jesus was entombed just before the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and other women disciples couldn't anoint Jesus' body with oil or myrrh to prevent it from decaying. Also, the evening of Saturday was too dark, and it was too risky for the women to go out at night, so they waited until early Sunday morning when the sun rose.

As soon as the sun rose early in the morning, the women disciples went to Jesus' tomb. They would have still been filled with fear and apprehension on their way there. Another concern was how to move the large stone blocking the tomb. With various thoughts and emotions swirling inside them, they arrived at Jesus' tomb.

However, when they arrived, the large stone that had blocked the tomb was already rolled aside. Perplexed, they entered the tomb, but they couldn't find Jesus' body anywhere. Instead, they found a young man sitting where Jesus should have been lying, who said to them, "He is not here; he has risen!"

After encountering this man, the emotions of these women disciples became even more complex. So, they fled from the tomb in fear. This is the story of Jesus' empty tomb recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

However, if you have read the accounts of Jesus' resurrection described in other Gospels, you would notice that each Gospel portrays the resurrection of Jesus slightly differently.

For example, in Mark's Gospel, it mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome going to the tomb early in the morning, but in Matthew's Gospel, it says only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Additionally, in Matthew's Gospel, it mentions a young

man waiting for the women disciples inside the tomb, whereas in John's Gospel, there were two angels inside the tomb.

At this point, we have one question: "Why are the stories of Jesus' resurrection described differently in each Gospel, even though we believe in one God?"

This is because the authors of each Gospel emphasized the situations they were facing and what was more relevant to them, resulting in slightly different accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

Furthermore, the reactions of the disciples experiencing Jesus' resurrection differ greatly. Even after Jesus appeared to them, his reactions also varied. Jesus called out the names of some disciples when he appeared to them. And to others, he simply stood before them. In some cases, Jesus shared meals with them, while in other instances, he showed them his hands and side for them to touch.

Since each of us is in unique circumstances, it means that our experiences of God can only be different. And at the same time, God also meets us in various ways and manners.

Each of us comes to the mystery of the Resurrection from different perspectives. For some of us, belief in the truth of Easter is immediate and easy. For others of us, it takes time. For some of you, you hear the idea of a crucified Jew, entombed for three days, and you may say, "Sure, I've believed in the truth of resurrection since I was a child." Others of you may see all these flowers and hear the joyful Easter music or listen to my sermon and in the end say, "I'm just not sure. I don't really believe that I believe."

Some of you may come to this joyful morning full of joy and happiness. Easter Sunday is your favorite Sunday of the church year. You have been rehearsing the music, or looking forward with great anticipation to this Sunday for a long time. Others of you may be in gloom rather than in light. You have just lost someone whom you love. You may find all this joy and triumphant gladness to be somewhat oppressive.

However we come to the mystery of God's defeat of the powers of sin and death in the resurrection of Jesus, the risen Christ will find a way to make himself known to us that we might believe and then go forth to tell the world,

"He is risen!"

It took Mary Magdalene a while to believe in the Resurrection. It was only when Christ called her name that she was able to announce to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." It took the other disciples longer to believe what they had seen with their own eyes.

Still others of you see all the evidence, hear the complete testimony, and scripture's rationale for believing but you are waiting. For you, resurrection faith is not so much intellectual assent as it is waiting for your name to be called: "Mary," or "John," or "Lea."

How have you come here this Easter morning? What path has brought you here?

It doesn't matter how you have come here. What's important is the promise implied behind today's Easter gospel: Christ is risen, not entombed in a dead.

He's on the move! Moving toward you, eager for you to see and, in seeing, to believe, wanting to give you what you need in order to believe, calling your very own name.

I don't care how you come to Easter. Christ's promise is that you won't go away the same. You, even amid your questions, doubts, or reservations — Christ will give you the faith to be able to say to the world, in one way or another, "I have seen the Lord!"

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Amen.