

Easter Day, A ✕ D 2010

Mark 16:1-8

In the Name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Once the shops opened after the end of the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices. Then, as soon as the sun rose, even leaving while it was still dark as the evangelist John records it, they went to the tomb to show the dead body of their Lord proper respect, to anoint it with the burial spices. Along the way, they were asking each other a question they ought to have considered before embarking on the trip: "Who will roll the stone away for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

2 O foolish women. Were you not there when Jesus stood at the opening of the tomb of Lazarus? Didn't you hear His promise, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, even though he die, yet will he live"? Did not your eyes see the once-dead man walk out of the grave with life restored to him? How could He who called Himself the Resurrection and the life remain in the tomb? How could He who predicted His crucifixion as well as His resurrection remain behind the stone portal? O foolish women and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written, was not the death of the Christ, the Son of God, the reason for His coming? O foolish women, did you not notice the dead who were raised as soon as Jesus died? Did you not notice those who came out of their graves and wandered into Jerusalem when God the Son died? Didn't their rising from death demonstrate to you that the death of Jesus forever shattered the grip of death on those who belong to Him? If death could not hold those who belong to Him, how could it ever hope to hold Him whose death rendered death impotent?

3 O foolish women, foolish men. Is their problem not also yours? Who will roll the stone away? Like it or not, death is your fate. And you are trapped in the tomb of sin. Who will roll the stone away? Not you. For all your seeing, you remain blind. For all your hearing, you remain deaf. Who will roll the stone away from your blind eyes? Who will roll the stone away from your deaf ears? Who will roll the dead stone of your heart away? Every sin is an act of rebellion, a turning away from God. Sin naturally means death, then, as it is a turning away from the One who is the Resurrection and Life. Sin means death, not as punishment as much as the natural consequence of departing from the Source of your life, God. Your selfish heart knows only one god: yourself. Your lips are ever ready to sing his praise, your hands always ready to serve him. Your eyes are ever ready to look on the objects which bring pleasure to this self-god, be they wrapped in shrink wrap or lace, electronic or flesh. Your ears are ready-tuned to listen to your own words, with which you excuse your sins as foibles and dismiss your transgressions of God's eternal Law as mere adaptations to ever-changing times.

4 Who will roll the stone away? Who will save you from this tomb of sin? Who will roll away the boulder of death that keeps you trapped? Who will save you from a body of sin and a life that ends in death? Repent. All the vain pursuits of life offer no way to escape from the ominously looming death. There is no magic pill, no doctor's cure, no device to drive death away. It lurks. All your self-worship, all your self-reliance, all your trusting in yourself to provide for your own good will ultimately fail. The slow decay of your body, the gradual breaking down of your health is just a sign of your weakness and your inability to save yourself. Repent.

5 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 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. 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.

6 The stone has been rolled away. The grave is empty. Jesus is risen. The Lord Christ whose death defeated death rendered not only His grave but every grave limp and powerless by dying on the cross. Sin is your malady; death is your problem. So the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took human flesh in the Virgin’s womb to take away your sin and to die your death. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for you. Jesus took all your sin onto Himself on the cross. With your sin, He died your death, the big death, the death you deserved. He endured the full fury of God’s wrath in your place, so that you might receive the full mercy of God in His place.

7 Death is no longer your problem; sin is no longer your captor. Jesus rose from the grave. The stone is forever rolled away. Though you may die the little death, a death Holy Scripture mockingly calls a sleep, you will not die the big death. The resurrection of Jesus belongs to you. Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through that glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. In the ordinary waters of Holy Baptism, you died with Jesus, were joined into His death, received the full benefit of His substitutionary death in your place. And as certainly as Jesus emerged victorious from the grave, so will you. United into the resurrection of Christ through Baptism, you will rise.

8 You are a part of the Body of the Resurrected Christ. His Body rose from the grave. Life is yours. Death is dead. The grave is empty, but the Altar is not. The same Body which was crucified for you and raised to life is here given to you as the medicine of immortality. The very blood which was poured out for you and which courses through the living veins of the Risen Christ is here poured into your mouth. Your body of death is transformed by the Body and Blood of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, Jesus promised, by faith will live forever. Easter is not mere remembrance; it is a reality, your reality. All who eat the Body of Jesus are joined into His Body, His risen Body. In the Lord’s Supper, you feast on the Resurrection. Who will roll the stone away? Jesus has. For you.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Jeff Hemmer