

WELCOME 4th April 2021 – Easter '21 B

Mark 16:1-8

Out of battery – No more memory – We can't afford it – I don't have time Much of contemporary life is defined by limits...by scarcity...by what we **don't** have.

We work. We eat. We sleep. We stay busy...fill our days with activity. We live. But are we truly alive? We take it as given that all good things come to an end... But what we know today is that God doesn't intend that for us...ever...or now.

*“Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. **Now go** & 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.”*

Just living day to day...Treading water until we no longer can...Putting one foot in front of another merely existing is not the life we were created or redeemed for & it's not the resurrected life of Jesus or his people.

Easter at its heart is not about the empty tomb but about the fullness of life the risen Jesus guarantees & makes come alive in us. When he rises not just **FROM** the dead but **FOR** life w/ his people there's power & conviction & boldness & joy & hope & healing & lives are transformed...made radiant by the power of God & the triumph of his grace & the rule of his love over all things...

Jesus rises not just **FROM** the dead but **FOR** life w/ his people precisely because it is life in its fullest that he promised **AND** that he delivers...eternally...**AND** also today.

The flip side of Easter is life that is overflowing w/ unbounded joy – brimming w/ unlimited hope & flooded w/ unending love.

It's a gift that you receive today...& tomorrow & the day after...because He is risen from the dead! Christ is risen!

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, on this most joyous day we offer our thanks and praise to You; Creator of heaven and earth, creator, lover & Saviour of all humanity.

Lord of life; bring your word of life as a light to those in darkness.

Lord of peace; bring your word of peace to those enslaved by fear.

Lord of love; bring your word of love to those in need of comfort.

Lord of eternal joy; be known through us as you work in our lives today and always.

In the name of the risen Jesus Christ...He who is life...we pray...Amen

FAITH CHAT:

1. How does contemporary culture define “life” or offer fullness of life? Is that real life?
2. Why is Jesus raised from death a big deal for you? What are you doing about that?

EASTER '21 B – THE FLIP SIDE...OF LIFE

It's funny...odd not humorous...our world has spent the last 12 months worrying about dying. More than any other time in the 59 yrs of my life there has been global awareness & action to prevent dying. Even the useless "duck-n-cover" nuclear survival drills of my childhood cannot compare to what we have done since March of last year.

We've been tested at the slightest hint of illness - even when we weren't sick. Isolated as a matter of course. Filled our landfills w/ used masks & gloves & empty hand sanitizer bottles. Cleansed our hands until the skin rubbed off. Glared at scofflaws who refused to submit & heaven forbid sang aloud unmasked! We viewed every public sneeze & cough as a mortal threat.

We have tracked cases & deaths w/ morbid obsession all the while worried that our preventions would be for naught. We shut down cities...states...whole countries to even internal travel...And all year I've heard Jesus whispering over my shoulder: *Hey John! Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? – Mt 6:27* Well...no...of course not.

We know we can't be reckless/careless because our lives are short enough as it is. Even on-the-edge extreme sportspeople knows that life ultimately ends...We hate it but we get it that we live w/in limits...only so many days/week – hours/day - years to anyone's life - \$\$/bank accounts & there are no guarantees to any of it. No one can promise me my next breath. My cardiologist always tells me that just after he's told me what great shape my heart is in & I'm about to leave his office. He's a real funny guy!

I can't fault the women heading to Jesus' tomb on that 3rd day...I don't care how many times he forewarned them his grave would be empty...For all they know as they walk that sad path; in this world Death is inevitable - Resurrection is not. Their day begins w/ heartbreak & tear-stained pillows. The sun rises but their grief/despair won't burn off. They start w/ hopelessness & work down. The spices they carry are not for embalming/preserving Jesus' body they are to mask the stink of his decaying flesh. Even the stone is an insurmountable barrier...Everything about their trip to the tomb reeks of death. The whole thing looks like one more of life's dead ends.

And our world translates that expectation of limits – scarcity – pie-only-so-big – this far & then nothing...into every area of life...I am bombarded daily w/ Super & Insurance ads – w/ health warnings & fitness advice – investment companies & banks & mutual funds tell me my \$\$ portfolio is wanting – my knee tells me often it's worn out – my children remind me of my advancing age – I see folks build escape

clauses (pre-nups) into their marriages - my call allows me to stand graveside w/ great frequency...as we noted just Friday... no matter the advances of technology, medicine, or our sciences...no matter how much we try to avoid it, because of sin, death comes. We reach our end...and slowly accommodate ourselves to that reality.

So I do understand the women's sad walk to the tomb & in some measure I understand their frightened flight from it. *The women fled from the tomb, trembling & bewildered, & they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. (terror & amazement had seized them; & they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.)* In some measure I understand what for all the world looks like utter failure on their part.

1st This is the only resurrection story where Jesus doesn't make an appearance. And no gospel writers even suggests his absence makes a bit of difference. They have only a vision of a man in white – we know that means "angel" but I'm not sure they do He greets them with the best news imaginable...He gives them 1 simple task...But instead of singing & dancing & shouting all the way back to the boys, they drop their spices & scamper...fleeing the tomb saying absolutely nothing to anyone.

We take it as given that all good things come to an end... But what we know today is God doesn't intend that for us...ever...or now. Easter at its heart is not about the empty tomb but about the fullness of life the risen Jesus grants & guarantees. When he rises not just **FROM** the dead but **FOR** life w/ his people there's power & conviction & boldness & joy & hope & healing & lives are transformed... made radiant by the power of God & the triumph of his grace & the rule of his love over all things... Jesus rises not just **FROM** the dead but **FOR** life w/ his people precisely because it is life in its fullest that he promised *You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living with you forever. Ps 16:11 – The thief comes only to steal, kill & destroy. I came that you may have life & have it abundantly. – Jn 10:10*

Easter is not just some empty tomb somewhere on some Judean hillside. Easter is a living Jesus who calls you to himself. Easter is a living Jesus who breathes his spirit into you & sends you in his name to the world at your fingertips. Easter is a living Jesus who speaks his word into your heart – forgives you again & again – calls you into his life & work in this world. Jesus said the abundant eternal spilling over life is a relationship: *"This is eternal life that they know you the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* – Jn 17:3 John, one of Jesus' closest friends echoes that *"This is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, & this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."* – 1 Jn 5:11

And what we are sent to say to a world that accustoms itself to death & rages it against it at the same time... *He is risen from the dead!* And that can be you too!

The Father's power to save is greater than the grave's ability to destroy. The Father's love for you is stronger than any power on this earth. No life is so ruined that it cannot be reborn & redeemed in the image of Jesus & the power that raised him from the dead. Nothing can separate you from the Father's love or his desire to bless you & multiply his Spirit's work in your life.

Life at its fullest (now & forever) is living in the awareness that we are freely brought by God into a living & personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And that relationship of love grace power & provision changes everything because we have already been given all things - life that is overflowing w/ unbounded joy – life that is brimming w/ unlimited hope & life flooded w/ unending love...today tomorrow forever.

Let's pray with that in mind...**Loving God, engrave on our hearts, minds & souls that nothing can defeat your love, & nothing can sever us from the grace of the risen Jesus. Transform us such that we awake each morning with faith & hope restored, with joy abounding & with love readily flowing through every word we say & deed we do, to the glory of your wonderful name!. Through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**