

Sunday, April 1, 2018 – Easter Sunday/Full of Faith I
“Resurrected Living”

Mark 16: 1-8

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Full of Faith Series

Story Applied Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!) Yeah, alleluia, that means “praise God, praise Yahweh,” we praise Him for Jesus’ resurrection – but I’ve got to say, if the resurrection of Jesus is the center of Christianity, if it’s supposed to change everything and be the most important event in the history of the world, much less the central thing in our lives today, the immediate returns are really disappointing.

Maybe you’re surprised to hear me give a big “bah humbug,” because... Easter!... Now don’t get me wrong, praises of Alleluia do belong today. Jesus is risen, death is vanquished, your sins forgiven, you have eternal life, your own body will rise one day, and in joy of observing all of that, we celebrate and we feast. We can sum up this new life in Jesus as our new “resurrected living.” Yay Easter! So yeah, alleluia... we’ve got the triumphal music and Easter lilies, and we’ve got breakfast at church, and you’ll have your Easter ham or whatever this afternoon, the kids are hunting for eggs and enjoying their Easter basket and later having their sugar coma... all appropriate to the joyful occasion... resurrected living... but I mean really, look at this story of Jesus’ resurrection, the immediate returns are really disappointing!

Why doesn’t this good news doesn’t have the appropriate impact on His followers? Where is their celebration, where are the cheers, where are the “Alleluias?” Check it out... we’ve got the women at the tomb described as greatly distressed or alarmed. Then Peter, Jesus’ disciple comes – they’ve been told that Jesus is alive and risen but they didn’t just walk away from the tomb, they “fled” or “escaped,” depending on how you translate it – why? Because they were seized with trembling and horrific astonishment and they were afraid. Yikes. And while we don’t know for sure, even many very conservative Bible scholars believe that the 12 verses that follow our text aren’t original to the book of Mark... that is to say that not only do we get this weird, underwhelming report about the reaction of Jesus’ closest friends and disciples to this good news of the resurrection, but then Mark’s Gospel most likely originally ends with the line... ***Drumroll*** “and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

The End.

Blech. Like I said, the immediate returns are really disappointing. Mark supplies that “bah humbug” here this morning, you can see it plain as day, right there in between the lines.

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus changes everything but you wouldn’t always know it to look at my life or yours. I’ll admit it – sometimes I’m afraid. Afraid of all the “what-ifs” that dot the future, tempted to feel great distress when I’m caught off guard and things don’t go to plan. Be honest, it’s the same for you. Alleluia, Jesus is risen... and the next minute you’re seized with trembling and horrific astonishment, because you’re afraid. Blech. Bah humbug – supplied by you and me... you can read it plain as day, right there in between the lines of story of your life.

There’s a saying about bravery and courage – being courageous does not mean an absence of fear – it means doing the right thing despite the fear. In a similar way, we can say this about faith – believing in Jesus doesn’t mean the absence of fear. We’re starting a new sermon series today called “Full of Faith.” One of the first things we see about resurrected living is that faith – belief in Jesus will still involve fear in the lives of Jesus’ disciples on this side of Heaven, even though Jesus has already defeated everything that we fear. Easter matters because whatever fear may bring to the table, whatever holdups we have in living faithfully, Jesus is resurrected and living and offers freedom from fear to all who trust in Him. Being “Full of Faith” isn’t some platitude or command that I’m urging you to do – it’s a description of what you are, people of resurrection living. On Easter, Jesus rose. He claims you, just like those friends and disciples – fears, doubts, sin and all and to all those things and all the temptations that come our way we cry out Alleluia, Christ is risen!

And see, when it’s about Jesus, and what He did when He rose and not about your fear you’re your issues and what you bring to the table, there’s a relief, an undoing of that impossible load that comes with knowing deep down that you aren’t faithful enough to God.

Here’s what that means for you, right where the rubber hits the road – whether you’re brand new in church and checking things out or a Christian for as long as you can remember, you need to hear this about resurrection living... being a Christian doesn’t mean you’ve got it all put together. I talk to people who are all over the map in whether they believe in Jesus or have walked with Him for a long time and what I see is that so many of us are self-conscious and

afraid because of the problems we bring to the table. Some people who haven't been to church in a long time are often afraid to go – seized with trembling and terror. I get it... about a year ago I developed tendonitis in my knee and I let it rest for awhile... but it took longer than I wanted, and I had to go to rehab, and when it was time to go back to the gym I had the additional hold-up of knowing I haven't come in awhile and I'm out of practice and less in shape and who wants people making a big fuss about them when they come back after a long layoff... I get it. I know adults who haven't been baptized and even though they believe in Jesus are afraid to go forward with baptism – maybe because they're afraid they aren't good enough yet, or afraid they can't commit to living a good enough life afterward, so they flee from the very place where Jesus makes you alive with resurrection living. Other people are afraid to serve, because they just know they're not good enough so they say no – to being elders, or Sunday school teachers, or even attending a small group or Bible study – because they're afraid.

I have news for you: You're not good enough – but a life full of faith means before you listen to every bone in your body telling you to run, don't flee, stay at that empty tomb a little longer. Stay with Jesus did on Easter. He gives you new life, raised up from the ashes of your fear and terror and trembling – full of faith, resurrected living.

Resurrected living, a life full of faith, isn't brash confidence and cool bravado and it's not about achieving perfection on this side of Heaven... sometimes, the returns will be really disappointing. Resurrected living is trusting Jesus through the fear and terror, hanging onto the cross and the promises for Jesus for dear life everywhere this crazy world takes you, careening and jerking this way and that and knowing God has got you. Resurrected living, a life full of faith is a life full of a "healthy recklessness," a contradiction in terms of there ever was one.

Each of the next few weeks we'll talk about facing fears in life full of faith, trust in Jesus that holds on for dear life, as we explore every nook and cranny of our lives – so we live that healthy recklessness – like next week, living in radical vulnerability and trust by sharing life together with our family and church in community, to the following week about embracing the fear to trust God's direction as we make decisions that put God's priorities first in how we use the time, the stuff, finances that God entrusts to us, to reckless love and engagement with a

world that may want to do us in but we recklessly, at risk to ourselves turn toward it in love anyway... and that's just the next three weeks.

Easter and resurrection living aren't just for Easter Sunday. We're made alive by Jesus who has overcome all the things we're afraid of, the things that seize us with terror, to recklessly look that fear in the eye, firm in God's grip and full of faith and cry out, "Alleluia, Christ is risen!" (He is risen indeed, alleluia!" In Jesus' name, Amen.