

SEVENTH in Series on COVENANT: "A **ROY G BIV** LENT" -- **VICTORY** Mark 16:1-8
St Marks UMC, Charleston, WV Easter Sunday (April 5,) 2015

¹ When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

During the season of Lent our focus has been upon the RAINBOW COLORS OF THE COVENANT that God makes with humanity and with all of creation. We began with the Rainbow as sign of the covenant, that God revealed to Noah. And we are following the **ROY G BIV** of that rainbow. (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet)

I don't need to review all six of the preceding texts. They each dealt with one of the letters of ROY G BIV and today we end with V – for Victory. Today's sermon ends the one series and begins the new Easter series in which we will look at images of Christ.

The empty picture frame in the center of the front aisle shows the Tomb is empty and is also a beginning of what we will fill in each week for the images of Christ.

The tear off tab on the bulletin shows what they will be. You are invited to bring in pictures each week, to go with that theme. We will hang your pictures then on the wall, until we have most of the empty space up front here covered with pictures – we hope! If you help!

Let us pray.

In the sermon today, I am going to repeat some of the liturgy that we have already spoken, yea shouted, as we do each Easter. So when I say **Christ is risen!** I want you to shout out: **Risen indeed! Alleluia!** This means you will have to stay awake and pay attention.

It is easy on Easter Day, 2015 – almost too easy – for us to celebrate this glorious day. It's one of the reasons I like the Gospel of Mark account of Easter so much.

We know what was in the women's hands when they went to the tomb – spice they had bought for the preparation of Jesus' dead body. But we don't know what was in their hearts – fatigue, despair, duty, love, numbness?

Two things that we DO KNOW from the Gospel are:

1. They didn't know how they were going to accomplish their mission. But they went anyway. There was THAT ROCK thing. But they went anyway
2. We know that AFTER they received – what we today call – GOOD NEWS, they were TERRIFIED.

I have spent a lot of time reading Monday morning quarterback Biblical scholars pontificating on their action, as Mark describes it.

Can you imagine how YOU would react, if you went to the funeral home for the visitation after a loved one's death, and the funeral home director came out and said, "I'm afraid we won't be having the visitation tonight. You see, when we began the embalming process, your loved one got up and walked out."

Really! How much different would your response have been from Mary, Mary and Salome?

Really! What do you do when you're just holding on by a thread and someone comes along and cuts that thread?

That's where Mary, Mary and Salome were.

In Flannery O'Connor's short story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," the character known as "the Misfit" says: ***"Jesus was the only one that ever raised the dead, and he shouldn't have done it!"***

These women didn't come to the grave expecting to find a resurrection. With their spices in hand, they came expecting to find what they thought was the only alternative – a dead body: All over! Done! Finished!

13th century Persian poet and mystic **Rumi** wrote:

The mystics are gathering in the street. Come out!

**Leave me alone; I'm sick.
I don't care if you're dead. Jesus is here. And he wants to resurrect
somebody!**

You see, the Resurrection NOT ONLY defeats the power of death, BUT ALSO turns the predictable world on its head. What NOW is the core? What now is the center? The women had their worlds turned upside down. No wonder they acted as they did.

But what about us? Are we as shocked or has it become just chocolate bunnies and new clothing, March Madness extended, and life goes on as always?

You see, if we do not deal with the Shock of Easter, then we miss out on the POWER OF EASTER.

Jesus has been turned loose in the world.

Mar, is not alone in posing questions that are hard to grapple with. There are lots of unanswered questions in all four Gospel accounts of Easter. FAITH is not meant to be a mere intellectual assent to ideas, nor the figuring out of static answers to the questions raised.

The human mind is capable of truly knowing God, but it cannot exhaustively grasp God as an Object of Knowledge.

The God who writes straight lines from Crooked Lines is a God we cannot figure out. And THANK GOD FOR THAT!!

We say **Christ is risen! Risen indeed! Alleluia!** But this is an admission of how we are still in a state of wonder, of awe. We can't understand it all.

Death was conquered on Easter. For the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus. And for us.

God took the

- Desertions
- Betrayals

- Failed expectations
- Failures to recognize
- Messed up theologies
- Insecure religious leaders
- Insecure political leaders
- All the wrong headed
- Weak moralized
- Messed up

stuff of that day and VOILA! – made it come out alright.

How much different is it for us today? Do you recognize the

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stuff of our lives? God is **STILL** making things right...still writing straight with our crooked lines.

- Let me just tell you how messed up the world is ...
- And then listen to someone else tell you just how messed up the world is ...
- for all the exact opposite reasons that I cite.

And God will still make it right ... as God did on Easter.

Let me ask you this?

- IS GOD STILL AT WORK IN THE WORLD TODAY?
- Where are YOU seeing signs of NEW LIFE in YOUR life, today?

When so much of the world had it wrong, Jesus showed them a BETTER WAY. Words of condemnation from the cross He did not speak. He just SHOWED them the way.

As a follower of Christ, setting the world straight is not my job. As a follower of Jesus, I need to still just SHOW people a better way, without speaking against them. And I need to be mindful of how God is still writing straight with crooked lines and showing signs of NEW LIFE, ABUNDANT AND ETERNAL, breaking forth around me.

What do I need to let die in me that I can let God come in and write new straight lines? Can we each answer that question?

Where do I need to let NEW LIFE be born through me ... in spite of?

Am I really ready to be amazed? [Here, empty egg shell left from Children's sermon is cracked on preacher's head ... hopefully it will be completely empty.]

Christ is risen! Risen indeed! Alleluia!

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