

In the Bible there are four gospels, books that tell the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and all four tell the story of Jesus' resurrection but they all tell it differently and Mark is the most different. The oldest and the best manuscripts that we have of the Gospel of Mark all end at verse eight, "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." It would be nice to have more. It would be nice to get a Great Commission like in Matthew, or Jesus appearing to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee and cooking them breakfast like in John, or the Road to Emmaus like Luke but no.

In Mark when the women come to anoint the body of Jesus on Easter morning what they find is an empty tomb, an open space. There is a young man and he gives a message, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here." There is an open space and into that open space there is a promise, "Jesus is going ahead to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

What is so interesting about the open space and promise is—this is where we live. We don't have a physical presence with Jesus. We don't have visible encounters with Jesus. There is an open space where the promise is given. Jesus will meet us on the way. Jesus is calling us into a future. This promise didn't just happen once two thousand years ago; it's dynamic, it is moving and changing and adapting, it happening today, for us. The resurrection created an empty tomb, an open space, and into that space comes the promise and from that promise we are called to take a next step into a future. They won't

know if the promise is true by staying in Jerusalem. We only know what the promise means as it calls us out into the next chapter, next adventure with Jesus on the road of faith. And that is something so essential to what faith is; faith is summoned into being by a promise and the promise has the power to open up God's future into which we are called.

The promise meets us where we live—the promise says "go and tell the disciples... and Peter..." the promise includes Peter. The promise includes the one that fiercely denied Jesus three times, the betrayer can be reconciled, there is a place in God's future for all of us who have fallen short, who have *messed up big time*. The promise overcomes the part of us that is broken—the part of us that uses perfectionism to hide and control, the part of us that grabs a beer and a banana-nut muffin to ease the shame, aka take the edge off. The promise calls us to be our truest selves—the self that God created us to be.

One of the things I find so comforting about the Gospel of Mark is its honesty; the response to this promise, being called into God's future is terror. The gospel of Mark says, the three women, "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid," and I can identify with that. The promise says, "Jesus will meet you on the road." And I say, "Wonderful, can I have an interactive map that identifies all the possible potholes and will automatically reroute me if traffic gets too bad?" or "Great, Jesus is calling me, can I get the details on where, when and how Jesus wants me to go?" "God will meet you on the way," is terrifying. I'm just like the three woman at the tomb, I'm

going to stay in Jerusalem and stay safe inside my own little comfortable world... but if I believe the Gospel of Mark, and I do, the simple fact that we are reading the story of the women at the tomb means they didn't remain quiet, the promise drew them out of their terror, the promise drew them onto the road and into God's future.

There was a Rabbi from Krakow and he has this amazingly vivid dream that there is a treasure buried under a bridge in this far away city. When he wakes he throws some things into a bag and travels many many miles in many many days. He comes to the bridge and he hides in the bushes trying to figure where the treasure is. Soon a policeman calls to him and says, "You there! What are you doing?" The Rabbi says, "Me? Oh, nothing." The Policeman says, "No, I've been watching you. You've been spying on the bridge for hours. What are you doing?" The Rabbi comes out of the bushes and says, "Well you're never going to believe this but I had a dream that there was treasure buried under this bridge. I've traveled many many miles and now I realizing this is all a waste." The policeman begins to laugh and says, "You believe dreams like that? If I believed dreams like that I would believe there is treasure hidden under the bed of a Rabbi in Krakow." The Rabbi says, "Thank you." and he hurries home.

The power that drew the women from their terror, the power that continues to empower us is that treasure of Jesus' love that is always with us, so close to us that at times we miss it.

God's love known best in Jesus is all encompassing, never ending, never failing, it lifts us up, catches us when we fall, comforts us when we mourn, sings *with* us in our joys and sings *to* us in our hard times, God's love wins.

The simplicity of Mark's resurrection story gives us the very essentials of our faith: 1)there is a promise that draws us into the world, where Jesus is. 2)like Peter we will fall and fail and are always fully brought back into God's community and 3)*we don't have a script, we don't know how it all will go. What we have is the promise and the faithfulness to the one that gives the promise. Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!*