

The Feast for the Resurrection of Our Lord

Mark 16:1-8

Christ is arisen. He is arisen indeed. And *alleluia*, indeed. He is arisen, as He said, and arisen indeed, and so all is well. It turned out to be true, that which He said, which we could not and would not believe. And since that turned out to be true, must not all that He said be true? Well, it must, and this means that He did indeed give His life as a ransom for the many, that His body was indeed given over to death, and His blood shed, for the atonement of sins. And that He has arisen from death indeed, who died for the sin of all sinners, it must mean, must it not, that with His sufferings and death the price and penalty for sin has been paid indeed, also, in full and in abundance, that we are right with God, that all that would stand against us before His judgement is dealt with and done away with and is no more before Him who shall judge both the living and the dead, all impurity and guilt and debt, and we shall not suffer for ever in that Hell which is His holy hatred against evil, rather, we shall live and be with Him for ever in the fullness of His goodness and His glory. He is arisen, and arisen indeed, and so, all is well indeed, for we are right with God, and when we are, then all is well, for He is God.

And we are glad to hear it, are we not, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed. We are glad to hear it, not only today, but whenever we hear it in Church, as Christians do on the first day of every week, on the day of His resurrection. And we take what have heard with us all through the week, that all is well, that in spite of all our faults and flaws and failures we live all our days under the promise of His merciful forgiveness for all our sins and shortcomings, and His promise has proven true already, for He is arisen, and arisen indeed, and all is well, for we are right with God.

We are glad to hear it, and to know it, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed. Most of us are not actually *amazed* by it, though, are we? I suspect that none of us really is. We knew that we were going to hear it today, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed; we have heard it for years, not only every Easter, but every Sunday. It is what we come here for. And although we are glad to hear it, and to believe it, and know it in faith, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed, and we are right with God, and all is well, well, we find ourselves unable to remain excited about that which we already knew, and have known for years.

Some will tell us that we *should* be excited about it, always, and *have* to be.

If we *really* believed it, they say, that Christ is arisen, and arisen indeed, we would be *ecstatic* about it, shouting it from the rooftops, and have nothing else on our minds. And since we are not, we can understand from what they say, who are so concerned as to how others should feel, that must mean that we are probably not believers at all, not *real* believers, and not right with God, and nothing is well, even though Christ is arisen, and arisen indeed, because it really does not mean at all that much that He is that, arisen, and arisen indeed.

The women, though, they were amazed, we hear of Holy Scripture, at what the young man told them there, at the tomb, that He is arisen. Well, of course they were. They had not expected to hear that; unlike us, it was not what they had come for, nor had they heard it often over the years. Had they ever even heard anything like it? Well, actually they may have heard something somewhat like it, if they had been around, as they may well have been, when our Lord Jesus taught His disciples that *the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again*. And if they had *really* believed Him, they would have known already, would they not, and there would have been no reason for them to be amazed. But amazed they were, we hear of Holy Scripture today, and rightfully so, it will seem, no doubt, to most of us.

Ever so much more amazing might it seem to some of us to hear that *they said nothing to anyone*. Well, it might be that quite a few husbands here will be amazed, to begin with, to hear about any woman not saying anything; but that is beside the point, I guess.

They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid, Holy Scripture tells us. And we can understand why they would be that, afraid. And we who are accustomed to hearing what they had heard, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed, for us it is easy to assume that they were afraid mostly because no one was likely to believe them if they were to say anything to any one about what they had heard. But if we think about it a bit, we will understand that there might be much more to it, that they may very well have been afraid because of the very magnitude of what they had heard: that that had happened which never happens, that He is arisen, whom they had known and loved, and for real, so that they had found His tomb to be empty, that the sin of all sinners has been dealt with and done away with, and sinners are right with God, and all is well, and all has changed, that they had come to stand face to face with the realities of God, and all for real.

If we bother to think beyond our own experience and assumptions and ideas we will understand very well that the women would be at least as frightened by what they had heard had happened as they would be of not being believed if they were to say anything to any one about what they had heard had happened.

And then we can think about why it is that we ourselves are so often so reluctant to shout it from the roof tops, or do not even consider doing it, that He is arisen from death, who died for the sin of all sinners, that all sin has been dealt with and done away with, and sinners are right with God, and all is well. Is it only because we are afraid of what others will think of us? We can think about, also, why it is, that although we are glad to hear it, and to know it, in faith, to be true, that we are not more excited about it than we are; is it really because we do not care? Or is it, perhaps, that it is difficult for us to come to terms with that which is too good to be true, and relate to it with that in us, which is of the world?

The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, writes the holy Apostle Paul, nor can he perceive them, because they are but spiritually discerned, that is: we will only receive and perceive the things of God in so far as He Himself makes us to. What the Spirit speaks is out of this world; literally out of this world. It is foreign to this world, and to that in us which is of this world. It contradicts pretty much all that we know and experience as real life. We know it only in faith. So of course it is not easy for us to share it with those with whom we do not share the faith, whom we cannot expect to understand that which is so precious to us, which we can barely understand and explain to ourselves.

It is in spite of ourselves and all that is ours that we believe it, that He is arisen, and arisen indeed, who died for the sin of all sinners, that we are right with God, that all is well. Sin in us will not know of it; we only believe it because He Himself makes us to.

We hear today that the women said nothing to any one because they were afraid. But why? That is: why must we hear about this today, and our own shortcomings with regards to the faith? Why are we not allowed to just celebrate that He is arisen, and arisen indeed, without all this negativity?

It is a thing about the Gospel according to Saint Mark: it seems to go out of its way to make all things appear dreary and dreadful, to highlight the faults and failures of the faithful, even with regards to the faith, and the failure of the faith to make all things well in the world.

Most likely this is because the Gospel according to Saint Mark was written with Christians in mind, who had failed the faith in the face of persecution, even to the point of *denying* the faith before their persecutors. And this the peculiar message of the Gospel according to Saint Mark becomes that it is spoken to such as those, the Word of God of His salvation, to *real* sinners.

Even today, although this is the feast of victory for our God, we have it held before us that our life in this world is one not only of suffering and sorrow, but also of sin. For that is our reality; it is real life as it really is. And we need to be reminded of this, at all times; otherwise we will come to think of the faith as something that it is not. We will come to think of the things of the world as if they were the things of God, whatever excites us, whatever amuses us, whatever makes us feel good. We will forget what are actually the things of God, and perhaps even come to despise them, as many do, who claim to be Christian, and think poorly of preaching and teaching and worship of the things of God, that He is arisen, who died for the sin of all sinners, and arisen indeed, that we are right with God, and all is well, and long instead for what some call *joyful* worship, worship of ourselves and our own, of good feelings and a cheerful mood.

And for those who have ears to hear, it brings precious assurance and affirmation to hear how Holy Scripture acknowledges real life as it really is. To Christians such as ourselves, who fail with regards to the faith, as all Christians do, and if we say that we do not, we are not of the faith at all, as *the Truth* is not in us, for us to hear the Word of God acknowledging real life as it really is, and as we know it, as a life of suffering and sorrow and sin, well, it makes it clear that the Gospel, the Word of salvation God has His Church proclaim, it is indeed a Word spoken into the real world as we know it, to real sinners such as ourselves, even though it is in itself a Word from out of this world, but then, it is, for it is from God, and so, what it speaks must be true, and cannot *not* be. What you feel and do not feel does not make that to *not* be real, which God speaks and promises; who do you think you are?

And so we joyfully embrace it, that He is arisen, who died for the sin of the world, and arisen indeed, and we are right with God, indeed, sinners as we are, with our faults and flaws and failures, and all is well, indeed. For Christ is arisen, and arisen indeed.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing. *Amen.*