

Sermon, Easter Day, 31st March 2024

Quairading, Beverley, Brookton and York

Go, tell ...Mark 16:1-8

At this point, if I say nothing – nothing happens. Until you get fed up and go home! The Gospel today ends with the women saying nothing. The earliest copies of Mark's Gospel end at that point and we're left with uncertainty, fear, and silence.

But that can't be the end of the story, or we wouldn't be here? Three women – Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome – were there when Jesus died, saw where he was buried, and were the first to hear that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They heard from a complete stranger – and someone who looked strange! What they found and what they heard was not what they expected.

Two major surprises before it was even properly light. 'That they were alarmed' is one of those biblical understatement. Terrified, more likely? It's not surprising that they don't take in everything they're told and obey to the letter. Surely, the news that Jesus has risen, from a complete stranger, under forty-eight hours after he so publicly and horribly died, is not easy to take in. The whole situation is alarming to say the least; I think we can identify with that.

Thankfully and fortunately, we are sufficiently removed from that moment in that garden outside that tomb that we are not filled with fear at the news that Jesus is risen. However, fear can creep in for many of us when we hear two words from those instructions: 'go, tell'. Suddenly we can identify with those who went away after hearing that instruction and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid. We are somewhat removed from the alarming situation of a garden in the half light of morning with a young man in white who shines brighter than the day in place of the body of their friend. Therefore, we have the freedom to stop and hear the rest of what they were told.

'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."'

Therefore, we are advised don't be alarmed, this is not something to be afraid of. If we're looking for Jesus – as people do who come to churches might be – we're in the right place. He was crucified, he was dead; but now he is risen, he is alive.

The young man pointed to the best evidence he had – an empty stone shelf in the tomb where Jesus' body had been. There is evidence. They haven't got to go with nothing to report and neither have we. We have other accounts. We can read not only of the emptiness of the tomb but also the report that it was not empty – the body was missing but the grave clothes were left behind. As well we have the evidence of his appearance to one, two, a few and many people.

Do not be alarmed when he says 'go, tell'. Also, don't be alarmed because of where he tells you to go. 'He is going ahead of you into – Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'

The question we might contemplate this Easter Day is "Where is our Galilee?" Galilee for Jesus' followers was home, familiar territory, where their work was based, where their family lived, where they knew everyone. Galilee was where people would hear the news from friends and relatives. Similarly, our Galilee is where we get to share this news of a risen Jesus, which points to life and hope for all because even death could not hold him. Similarly, our Galilee – home, family, friends, workplace, community – is also where we will see him. 'Galilee' is where we are sent to tell, and where we will find he has already been; where he will meet us, and where we will see him already at work.

Therefore, may I encourage you to look for him here, and in doing so I hope in some way you find him. Also go – go back to your Galilee and you'll find he's been there ahead of you and meets you there. Do not be alarmed, but join with those women (eventually), the angels, apostles, and countless generations since, in saying with conviction: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!**
Alleluia!

Might it be that our celebration this day will encourage each of us to respond to the challenge to 'go, tell'!