

Easter Sunday
Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish
St. Francisville, Louisiana
1 April 2018

Mark 16:1-8

I asked myself a question this morning. After weeks of planning for the events we have celebrated this week, I asked, “What makes the event that we celebrate today so particularly important that we felt the needed to celebrate it in this fashion? This is an important question and the answers may be different for each of us, so, let me tell you why I am here. I am here because I follow a Jesus that was more than a great humanitarian, more than a great moral teacher, more than a great martyr. He was more than a great prophet, more than a revolutionary teacher, more than a social activist, and more than a courageous Rabbi who spoke truth to power. I am here today because I follow a Jesus who was more than a good Jew and more than a good person, falsely accused and unfairly treated. I am here because I follow Jesus, the Christ, and Son of God, the only person in the history of the universe who had the power to conquer death conclusively, dramatically, unquestionably and eternally. I am here today because, “He is risen!

I don’t follow him because he offers me a pain-free, trouble-free, or conflict-free life, but because he promises the joy and liberation that only hope can produce. Though his resurrection I know that one day I will transcend my pain and my suffering. His resurrection gives me the hope that one day I will be liberated from all the brokenness of my life and I will be restored to God’s original design. His resurrection gives me the assurance that nothing has the power, or will ever have the power, to separate me from his love for me. His resurrection gives me unquestionable evidence of the eternity to which all his followers are called. Simply put, I follow him, because, “He is risen!

I don’t follow Christ because he offers a better way, but because he offers the only way. I don’t follow him because he is useful to me, or because he can make an already good life better. Rather, I follow him because only in him can I live a purposeful, holy, and fulfilling life. He is the way, he is the truth, and he is the life. I follow him because only he can give meaning to my life. His resurrection gives me the confidence that, although our pilgrimage begins here and must be lived out here, it will not end when we die. The ultimate goal of human existence is found not here, where we will always be pilgrims and foreigners, but in God’s own

presence, where we will be in perfect harmony with God, with creation and with each other. Without his resurrection all we have is empty dreams and aspiration. But, because of his resurrection, there is blessed assurance, confidence, and hope. I follow him because I know that this promise of eternal life through him and in him is only possible because “He is risen!”

When I was young I used to think of Christianity as the “Road less travelled by” of the famous poem by Robert frost, *The Road not Taken*. Let me remind you of one of the most famous verses of that poem. It reads, “I shall be telling this with a sigh, Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.” Seeing Christianity as the *Road Less Traveled by* assumes that there are only two roads, one leads to perdition and one to salvation. The road to salvation is less travelled because it is more difficult and narrower. Those who take that road are saved at the end because of their steadfastness, their dedication, their single-minded commitment to truth and justice, their good actions, and their faithfulness. After all, in the poem, the narrow road made all the difference.

Today, I don’t compare Christianity to the narrow road because I refuse to accept that life offers us just two choices. Just the opposite, we are bombarded constantly with thousands and thousands of roads. And these roads don’t have signs to make it easier for us to choose. It would be easier for us to follow a road with a name like, “Everything is Good Road”, or “Pretty Good for Louisiana Road”, or “The Prettiest Road of All”. Having these signs would help us avoid the roads with names like, “Mostly OK Road”, “Take at Your Own Risk Road”, “Temptation Road”, or “Perdition Road.” But, the thousands of roads given to us daily have no signs. Which means that it is very hard to know exactly what to do. If salvation depended on us walking perfectly that narrow road, then I doubt many of us would make it out at the end.

Let me tell you why I follow Christ. I follow Him because he is the only road worth traveling on. He is the only road that makes the difference for me because on his road there is no need for human merit, there is no need for righteous perfectionism, there is no need for perfect behaviors. Walking on that road is not so much something we do, as much as it is something that is done for us. Christ leads the way on all we need to do is follow his steps. We don’t need to make our own way. The path is marked. Our Redeemer Savior walks ahead of us and all we need to do is follow where he leads. He is not one of two roads, or one of a million roads, but, truly, the only road for

those who accept the Christian narrative of Salvation by Grace. He is the only road because “He is risen!”

We follow a leader who is alive; we follow a leader who *is* life. Our Christian hope and, in fact, our reason for being Christians is anchored in this truth: he was crucified, he died and he was buried, but he is alive, he is risen, he has conquered death, and in him we too will conquer death and have access to eternal life. What was old is made new, what was dead is brought back to life, the cornerstone that was rejected has become the chief cornerstone, God has used the sacrifice of his own Son for the salvation of all.

Christ’s resurrection is the very heart of our Christian hope and our Christian joy! But my brothers and sisters, many of us walk not as liberated, joyful followers of the Risen Messiah, but as defeated Christians. Many of us let life’s difficulties and trials take away our joy in Christ. Many of us let self-doubt, anger, envy, and the pressures of the world rob us of our joy in Christ. Many of us walk around like wounded birds, trying hard to stay alive, by our own strength and through our own means. Many of us are overwhelmed and we feel that God is very distant from us.

For many, God has become a distant stranger and not a loving friend who is always there for us. Let me remind you, Christ is risen! If you are overwhelmed by life’s, physical or emotional pain, illness, unemployment, conflict with others, resentment, difficulties forgiving yourself or others, or if you feel that God has forgotten about you, let me remind you, Christ is risen! Christ is risen, he sees you, he loves you, he is there to comfort you, he is there to welcome you back, he is there to accept you for who you are and to help you change into the person he wants you to be. He is there and will always be there. Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate you from his love. He will never abandon nor will he ever leave you. He is there, ready and waiting for you to claim him as your own. And when you do, he will transform your life in amazing and radical ways. He will give you the joy, the meaning and the purpose your life requires.

We are here, because we believe in the resurrection of our Lord, because we are baptized into his blood, because together we are Christ’s body, and because our church needs to exclaim everyday, “Alleluia, He is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed, alleluia!