

Get It?

Easter – Mark 16:1-8

preached at St. Paul's, Henderson April 8, 2012

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I've got to admit that I need your help this morning. The Easter sermon is probably the most important sermon that a preacher preaches each year. After all, this is *the* most glorious day in the whole Christian year. And besides that, I may only get just this one crack at some of you until Christmas rolls around again. But more importantly, the message of Easter is absolutely *central* to the Christian faith. The Good News of Jesus' resurrection and new life is a message that *everyone* needs to hear.

The problem is that I am never quite sure if I've gotten through. As important as the Easter message is, it's sometimes hard to know, from way up here, whether the message is received, whether it's heard and understood.

So rather than letting you sit there quietly – looking absolutely grand, I might add – I'm going to do the practically unthinkable – at least among Episcopalians – and this morning I'm going to ask you to actually *participate*. At key points in the sermon I will ask you the question, "Get it?" If you get the point, you should respond, "Got it!" If you don't get the point, well then... just sit there and stare back at me blankly, you know, like back in Middle School. Then *I'll* get the point, and maybe we'll have to cover the ground again. But based on the enthusiasm of your "Got it," if I think you're still with me, I'll say, "Good!" and we'll move on. I say, "Get it?" If you do, you say, "Got it!" If we're okay, I respond, "Good."

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

Okay, first the basic background. (Those of you who were at all the other services this week will have heard some of this before, but it can just be a refresher.) Okay, here we go: Jesus was nailed to a cross and crucified. It was late Friday afternoon when he finally died and they took him down off the cross. It was so late that they had to rush to get his body in the tomb before the Sabbath started at sunset. There wasn't time to properly prepare his body for burial. So very early Sunday morning the two Marys and Salome headed for the tomb to finish anointing Jesus' body.

On the way, they were worried about how they were going to get the stone out of the way so they could do their job. But to their amazement, the tomb was open; the stone was rolled away! Inside the tomb, the women were met by a man dressed in white. They were scared! He said, "Don't be amazed, you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen from the dead!"

Jesus was not in the tomb that morning. He's alive! He had died on a cross, but now he lives again! His heart was pumping blood. His lungs were breathing air. His brain was actively comprehending his environment! All his vital organs were functioning properly! Jesus, who everyone had seen die on a cross, was a living, breathing, walking, talking person again!

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

You got it, so far. And that's a good deal better than the characters in our lesson this morning. Because from what the Gospel tells us, the two Marys and Salome didn't get it. An angel tells them not to be afraid, and gives them very specific instructions. But apparently, they *didn't* get it. Instead of being excited, as soon as they got out of that tomb, they ran in terror. They were *so* afraid, Mark tells us, that they didn't tell a soul. Maybe they didn't get it because it was early and they hadn't slept well – after this week, I can relate to that. Maybe they didn't get it because the eeriness of the graveyard spooked them –

that would be a definite possibility for me. Maybe they didn't get it because they flat out didn't believe what the messenger had said.

Then, on the other hand, maybe they got it all *too* well.

Imagine that someone very close to you falls critically ill, perhaps a spouse or a parent or a child, and imagine that you are right there at their side when they die. The doctor pronounces them dead and they take the body away. Then, the morning of the funeral, you go to the funeral home, to the room where the night before you had received comfort from friends, and there stands an open and empty coffin. Beside it stands a man in a white suit. He doesn't *look* like any of the funeral home employees you've seen before. "Don't be alarmed," he says, "You're looking for So and So who died." "She's not here," he says, or, "he's *alive!*" Do you think you would be *glad*? Do you think you would run out and tell everyone you met, all your friends and family and neighbors? Or do you think you might just be struck dumb by the overwhelming scope of such a set of circumstances, by the enormity of something like that happening – to *you*?

Maybe those three women "got it" better than most of us do sitting here after a couple thousand years of reflection. *We* have replayed this event over and over for our whole lives. Maybe the *first* ones to have this experience realized its tremendous cosmic significance and were awe-struck at having witnessed it. Something more had happened in that tomb that morning than just the resuscitation of Jesus' lifeless corpse.

You see, Easter is about more than one man rising from the dead. It's about God breaking death's hold on all of creation, once and for all. It's about the hope that *every one of us* who believes in Jesus' resurrection *will* rise again. It's about the promise that all who believe in Jesus will have *eternal* life.

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

But wait, there's more. Imagine that it's *you* that are dying. The darkness closes in on you and the noises of the world seem farther and farther away. The blackness of death separates you from the only reality you have ever known. Then suddenly you hear a voice – a voice you know, but you hear it more clearly than ever, "Don't be frightened. You *were* dead. But now you're alive!"

The Scriptures tell us that we were *all* dead because of our sins. The depth of that death had cut us off from God. We were cut off from any possibility of making it right again. We were cut off from all hope of life. But through the resurrection of Christ, the power of death and sin over us has been destroyed. *We* are no longer dead, but alive! We have been made alive together with Christ because of our faith in him.

The Good News of Easter is not merely that the tomb was empty that morning. The Good News of Easter is not merely that Jesus rose again. The Good News of Easter is the Good News of our *own* resurrection. Easter is not just about Jesus' new life. Easter is not just about someone *close* to you receiving new life. Easter is about *my* new life... and yours... and yours... and yours.

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

Because if you really do "get it," you will leave here this morning a different person. The Good News of Easter has affects literally *everything*. And when the enormity and the personal impact of that is realized, it changes a person's life. If you understand that... if you accept that for yourself... if you really "get it"... then *live* it! If you get it, don't wander through life bewildered or frightened. If you "get it," go and tell the others that need to hear it. Tell them that the tomb of death is empty! Tell that Jesus is alive and working miracles and wonders, day by day, in *your* heart! Tell them that Jesus has made *you* alive! Alive to a new life filled with hope! Alive to a new life filled with promise! Alive to a new life filled with the absolute *joy* of Easter! Tell them that Jesus has made you alive to a new life filled with the love that conquered death and has set you free.

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"