

Sunday 4th April 2021
Mark 16:1-8
Rev.Scott Burton
Brightons Parish Church

Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's word,

Come Holy Spirit reveal Jesus to us.

Come Holy Spirit lead us in the way of Jesus.

Come Holy Spirit with power and deep conviction,
for we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.

The Easter holidays have begun and I wonder if anyone of us are feeling excited about that? Boys and girls at home, young people, are we excited about being home for even longer? Parents, grandparents you're thinking 'Oh how are we going to make these holidays go by again?'

I wonder if you feel a bit like me coming in today that it was going to be slightly anti-climactic because normally we come into Easter feeling quite buoyant. The seasons are changing, the days are getting longer, holidays are just beginning, hopefully, if the timing's just right, and celebrating what Jesus achieved at Calvary gives a fresh infusion of hope or at least normally it does. So I wonder how you are coming into Easter this year, and how you're feeling?

Are you maybe feeling tired and worn thin? Maybe frightened or sad, possibly frustrated or disillusioned, and if you're at home feel free if you feel able to share it on the live chat, because what's striking for me in our passage today, is that these three women who go to the tomb, they could have been feeling any of these feelings. Tired and worn thin for sure, they'd just seen their friend and would-be Messiah killed. Sad, most certainly. Frustrated, disillusioned without a doubt, because they'd hoped Jesus was the Messiah but here He is dead in a tomb. Frightened, well their leader has just been crucified on a cross as a traitor. Here they come to the place where they're going to give one last act of devotion, one last duty, and they're coming with all the emotions we feel; fear, or tiredness, sadness, disillusionment, but when they arrive there the body of Jesus is missing and an angel tells them that He is alive, He's not here and, in fact He's gone ahead of them into Galilee, and they with there with the disciples they will find Jesus the experience and news is so startling so bewildering, just leaves them trembling and awe-struck, as well as afraid so afraid. In fact, they feel unable to speak of it to begin with. So, what are we to make of this passage? I can almost understand why a later scribe would add verses 9 to 20 because it feels unfinished.

Yet, whether Mark intended for this to be the case or not, there are three brief things that we can take away this morning.

Firstly, in the midst of the most negative emotions we can experience at Easter, Jesus leads His disciples onward. The women are told 'He is not here, He is going ahead of you into Galilee.'

Likewise, maybe today, maybe in the midst of your struggles and your emotions, maybe you need to know that Jesus is not in some tomb and He's not defeated, maybe you need to know that Jesus is alive and He goes ahead of you and leads you on.

This past week we've all received the news of what's being envisioned for the Braes Churches. Seven congregations down to two, seven places of worship possibly down to two or three, and more change besides, and talking with a number of you from across the churches I know the range of emotions that we are feeling. Yet, in the midst of all, Jesus goes ahead and leads us on. He did it then, He does it now. So, where is the risen Jesus leading us today?

Second thing to note, the disciples are called to exercise faith, and faith is seen in action. They're not simply told what to believe, they're told to go, go, go - do what Jesus has said. Respond in faith, get walking to Galilee is basically what the angel says. In the midst of what you are feeling this Easter, Jesus leads you on and He calls you to respond in faith. Faith that is seen in the choices and actions

of your life, and what that looks like for each of us and for us as a group of churches could be myriad, but let's remember our purpose, a purpose that is meant to be core to any and every follower of Jesus - to invite encourage and enable people of all ages to follow Jesus.

What does that look like in your life? How is that seen in your life? Do you need to step out in faith this Easter and maybe put this purpose into practice?

Because, lastly, whilst the Gospel of Mark abruptly ends at verse 8, it does not mark the end of the story. We know that the women respond in faith, they tell the disciples and, with the disciples, they go and meet with Jesus, and from them a movement is birthed across the world, and we here and at home are the outworking of that, of Christians across the generations who for 2 000 years have exercised faith, but now it's our turn now, it's our turn.

We continue the story and that's true whatever age you are. You could be a child or a young person, or you're never too young to respond in faith to Jesus and be part of telling others about Jesus, or you could be at the other end of the age spectrum or anywhere in between and if that's you well two things: there's no get-out clause, and there's no retirement age.

In the kingdom of God it doesn't matter how busy we may be or whatever excuse we may give, we're all called, we're all called and the truth is we need everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, every age group, every person needs to get involved because Jesus is leading us on, He is leading us on as a church, as Christians in this area, but it will take every one of us to fulfill our purpose every one of us so we all have a part to play,

Friends, this Easter, this Easter may not be the Easter we wanted or expected, we may not have the positive emotions of previous years, yet Jesus is alive, He leads us on, He's not in the tomb and He calls us to respond in faith.

So, that the story continues in this generation and for generations to come, and so it's up to us, it's up to you here and you at home, will it continue? will we respond today in faith?

I pray that we will and so let's pray just. Now let us pray.

I wonder how you need to respond today? Which part do you need to respond in faith today?

Do you need to respond in faith to the truth that Jesus is alive? Do you need to respond in faith that He leads you on and He's not given up in you?

Do you need to respond in faith that you have a part to play? Where do you need to respond today?

Maybe you're not a Christian. Remember, you've not been following Jesus for a long time and if that's you I'd like to lead you in a prayer just now, to come to faith, put your faith in Jesus, to recommit yourself maybe if you've wandered and so, maybe just in the quiet of your mind or if you're at home speak it out loud with me and I'll lead you through a prayer just now.

Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for the things i've done wrong in my life, I'm sorry for wandering away from You.

I take a moment to name this Lord before You.

Please Jesus, forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong. Thank-you that You died on the cross for me, so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank-you that You offer me forgiveness and the gift of Your spirit. I now receive these gifts, please come into my life by Your Spirit to be with me forever. Thank-you Lord Jesus.

I wonder if you're going to respond in faith in another way, in one of the other two ways, and let me lead you now in a prayer maybe for these things.

lord I hear Your call to have faith, to trust that You really are alive here, that You've not given up on me or your church, You're not giving up on us or this world.

Lord, I hear Your call and though I may feel low today, though I may feel at the end of my rope, I trust, I respond in faith, and if You're calling me to serve, Lord, because You call us all to serve, show me how and where,

and help me know that Your power is greatest when I am weak. don't have to have it all together because it's You working through us that will see this world changed. Lord, I'm ready to play my part in this generation and for the generations to come. Help me give my life like You gave Your life for me. I offer it now in worship and service of You and of Your purpose. Lead us Lord, lead me individually, lead us as a church, and as a group of churches across the Braes, and to all You have for us now and forever. Amen

If you responded in faith today for the first time, I encourage you to get in touch with me, drop me a message, grab me afterwards, however it be because it's good to take that step in faith in prayer, but the next step is to tell someone, and I'm a really safe person to tell, honest! So, come and tell me, get in touch if you took that step of faith.