

Easter Year B 2012

“Go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him just as he told you.”

This is a challenging Gospel upon which to preach on resurrection, because unlike the three other gospels there is no resurrection appearance at the end of this gospel. Matthew and Luke use Mark as their basis for their respective Gospels but among many things they don't like in Mark...they mostly don't like the fact that Jesus doesn't appear to the disciples after the resurrection. In Luke Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus...In Matthew Jesus greets the disciples outside the tomb and they fall at his feet...In John Jesus appears several times...but here in Mark the disciples see that the stone has been rolled away from the opening of the tomb and that the body is gone...there is only a young man dressed in white telling them that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and will meet them as he promised in Galilee... where all this business got started in the first place, that's it...and then there's the disturbing last line of the gospel... “and they were afraid”.....and who wouldn't be, their lives were in danger because Jesus and therefore his followers have been judged as revolutionaries, challengers of the imperial status quo.

So what do we make of the end of this gospel...the word gospel meaning Good News...where is the good news following the harrowing events just taken place leaving the disciples scattered and fearful...Well lets back up again and remember that this gospel is about the Baptized, because that is what the prologue is about and as always you Aristotelian scholars know that in ancient rhetoric, the prologue tells us what the rhetoric is going to be about. In this gospel Jesus is the archetype of the Baptized. He is who we as community are meant to be...as Jesus taught us, following on the way, we are to feed and heal and clothe, and dignify the least of us. You've heard me say time and again, the lack of a post resurrection appearance notwithstanding, that ironically the root word for resurrection is shot through this gospel, and therefore there is not one or two resurrection appearances but many resurrection appearances in Mark...to the girl who was dead... little girl stand up...stand up take your mat and walk, Jesus says to the paralytic...to the man with the withered hand...Jesus says stand up...the word for resurrection literally means to stand with dignity....so as the baptized, our vocation is to know and claim our own dignity in Christ and then give it to others...that is what resurrection life is, and It requires paying attention....It is life that overcomes the indignity of suffering and death....all

manner of death in its myriad manifestations in our world, all manner of indignity in its myriad manifestations in our world...and perhaps most importantly resurrection life raises us and those of faith from the fear of death....In fact...In truth...I'm not so sure that is death we fear most....It may be that the thing we fear most is to be truly alive....perhaps that is why Mark describes the disciples even in the face of the resurrection, this amazing life born anew, that they were afraid, afraid to live into their own Christlikeness.

Keeping with Mark's theme the young man in white in the tomb, would be a newly baptized initiate (dressed in white...which was the traditional dress of the baptized)...this young initiate becomes witness and prophet that Jesus' ministry is not dead but raised to new life, witness and prophet of God's raised life set loose in earth....brothers and sisters that young man is us....He is sending them, sending us back to Galilee, the place of ministry...the story now a complete circle, beginning all over again: healing and feeding and raising the dead to life....the point being for Mark that let us not look only to the empty tomb, or demand a literal singular magical resurrection appearance to believe in resurrection life....no, we look into the everyday...in our homes, at school, at work....and particularly we look to the least among us....wherever one is made able to stand with dignity there is the raised Christ, real, alive, nothing magical about it.... Wherever one is made able to stand with dignity it is a resurrection appearance par excellence among us....Jesus is still to this very hour being raised....and in each resurrection appearance the world is utterly changed and Jesus still goes ahead of us....leading us into bearing his very life that he so freely gave and gives to the world....My son asked me many years ago; was the tomb really empty....and my answer to him was the same answer my mother gave me years before about another biblical matter....It is at least that true...because we can see for ourselves the risen Christ all around us, if we but pay attention and act as if this vision of a world made new is true.... resurrection life abounds...just as he told us....in every act of love, death and the fear of death is overcome...and as bearers, heirs of this raised life we are given the wholeheartedness, the wholeheartedness of Jesus who lives and moves among us....wholeheartedness, which is resurrection life... God's greatest gift to us, raised forever among God's people...the wholeheartedness, the courage to live full and whole lives so that others may live as well, as equals standing among us....that my friends is good news, good news for a wounded world....Alleluia, Christ is risen...(people: Christ is risen indeed) may God grant us the grace to live that response...