

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018
Preacher: Christopher McLaren
The Home of Resurrection

After the Sabbath, at first light, three grieving women make their way to the tomb. They carry spices and ointments to anoint the body of their friend and teacher. His death had been violent beyond telling and they had watched in horror, his criminal's death. They needed to be near the one whom they had loved - to care for his broken and lifeless body; to offer one last action of love. In the midst of loss, sometimes the only way forward is to draw the loss close. The three women wanted to wash the body and wrap it in fresh cloth with spices and ointment. The fragrance of their love for him made pungent and real. It was their way of grieving of saying farewell. Why had they killed this beautiful man?

Approaching the tomb, they are surprised to find the stone rolled away. Entering the tomb, they find a young man, dressed in white. The messenger tells the frightened women, "He has been raised: he is not here. [...] Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you. (Mark 16:7)."

The crucified one is in Galilee? Why would that be the first place he would go after his resurrection?

Why on the first day of life after death, did Jesus decide to go to Galilee?

Where else might Jesus have gone in his newly resurrected form? Perhaps the resurrected Jesus might have triumphantly re-enter Jerusalem. A perfect April Fool's joke for Pilate and King Herod. Hey guys, you thought you killed me dead and look, I'm alive. "I get knocked down and I get up again, ain't never gonna keep me down." Death is no joke but neither is the power of God to bring new life.

Imagine the scene, Jesus striding past the guards, "Hey Pilate, you made a very big mistake back there, you should have listened to your wife." Or maybe even better, he could have climbed the steps of Herod's Temple, addressing the crowds, lambasting them for their disbelief, their fickle nature, their violent tendencies, and scaring the temple elites witless.

But Jesus did none of that; he went home to Galilee, promising to meet them on their own comfortable ground where their story really began.

What is so important about Galilee? Nothing is really going on in this backwater of the Roman Empire. That is, nothing until Jesus of Nazareth arrived. Galilee was a dusty, out of the way sort of place. Then Jesus arrived, calling disciples. People began to listen to his teaching, to be attracted to him and they started leaving their homes, walking off good

paying jobs trying to be with him and learn his ways. Jesus' life began to shake up Galilee a little. He did not work in the big city of Jerusalem. In fact, he never went there again that we know of after his childhood, until the last week of his life. In Jerusalem his ministry ended but in Galilee Jesus gets his start and then returns there after he is raised.

Jesus, the Risen One, chooses to meet his own disciples in an ordinary place, where it all began. They had met Jesus in Galilee. He had called them to follow him first in Galilee. Their fumbling attempts at discipleship and understanding were largely rooted in Galilee.

I wonder how the disciples received this news of his resurrection and going ahead of them to Galilee?

In Jerusalem, they had all betrayed and deserted him, save for the beloved disciple. Peter had gone down in flames, denying that he even knew the man over and over again. Now they learn that they will meet their friend again in Galilee. What will he say to them about their betrayal?

The tomb is empty. Jesus is loose and headed to Galilee. For his friends and followers, there is no way to get away from him, no keeping him at a safe distance, and no forgetting him. He is not just a great idea or a noble thought, he is alive. He has been raised and comes to where his disciples live in Galilee, in Albuquerque.

I love the idea that Jesus is loose. The resurrection is not just something that happened once in a cemetery long ago. That would be easy. The resurrection is something that happens on ahead of us, in the world, our world, right here.

In Mark's gospel, the resurrection of Jesus is not primarily a belief about life after death (though that is certainly one way to think about it), rather the resurrection of Jesus is a vindication of Jesus' life in the world, a confirmation of his way of being and a deep invitation to follow in his way, to become a disciple here and now. In Mark's Easter, we are not so much asked to believe that we shall live forever, as we are asked to follow Jesus where he goes now. Mark's resurrected Jesus invites us to follow him wherever he goes, with life in him, new life that is stronger than the death dealing ways of our world, life that will not allow evil to win, life that keeps welling up to eternal life.

The messenger in the tomb instructs the women to tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going home to Galilee. The messenger also tells the women to go out and share what they have seen and heard.

Mark's gospel is peculiar as the women refuse to follow the messenger's advice, at least for a while. Evidently, they eventually shared their news since we have this story. They are the first witnesses to the resurrection just as they had been the one's who did not abandon and betray Jesus at the cross. Yet, they fled from the tomb in terror and amazement and "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." When you don't understand things sometimes silence seems like the best idea.

Suprise - April Fool's! Their silence will not keep the resurrection quiet. It is just hard to keep a resurrected Messiah secret especially when they insist on appearing to their disciples at home. The failure of the disciples, the denial of Peter, the betrayal of many, the silence of the women, none of this is the end of the story. A fresh start can be made. The new start happens where you live, in your life, at home in Galilee of Albuquerque.

Resurrection is not something that is reserved for the past, it is not one and done, it is the new life of God that is going before you, that is always ahead of your fears and failures.

In Galilee, the risen Christ appears to his disciples in the most ordinary of places: at breakfast, one evening when they are all hunkered down behind closed doors, on the beach while they are back at their fishing. There is something about the Risen Jesus that delights in meeting people in the everyday. That is really good if you want to meet Jesus because most of us live in rather ordinary places. Oh, I know you may be thinking that you have to come to church to experience the Risen One but that is not the only place you will meet Jesus. To be certain there are advantages to being part of a community of people who have met the Risen One, or who looking to discover Christ in their lives. There is something beautiful and nurturing about a community gathered around the life of the Risen One. But Jesus has gone before you to your home. He is to be found in the most ordinary and mundane of places in your life because he knows that these are the actual places that you live and need to know the Risen One.

I have to say that it is a deeply attractive idea to me, to find Jesus at home. I wonder if we might think about the whole notion of home. It is a beautiful notion isn't it. We all want to find home. In fact, each of us are searching for home; A place where we can be ourselves, a place where our failings are not held against us in a way that diminishes us, a place of safety and nurture, a place where there is a deep acceptance of the way we are and an abiding hope that we will grow and change into our best selves. Home is a powerful and comforting idea. Home comes in many shapes and sizes, but it has the telltale feel of acceptance, nurture, love, and compassion. Home is where you feel you can become the person you are intended to become, your own true self, authentic, vital and alive.

Even if we've never had the perfect home, we long for it. You may have heard a preacher say that inside each of us is a God-shaped hole: a place inside of our hearts that only God can fill. This is not a new thought, In 398 AD, St. Augustine of Hippo wrote in his *Confessions*: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Inside each of us is a God shaped home, where the Risen one wants to reside, to whisper news of death's undoing, to cultivate hope in difficult times, to breath compassion into your very being that you might love people into life again.

I like the idea that Jesus went to see his beloved disciples at home. He didn't go to Galilee to get even with those betraying and deserting disciples. He went home to Galilee to be with them, to show them that in him God had made a new kind of home for them. In his love and forgiveness of his very own bumbling disciples, in his going home to be with them, to share his new life with them, he gave them what they had been searching for all

along, a home in the heart of God. He demonstrated that when you make your home in Christ or when you allow the Risen One to make his home in you that something like resurrection keeps happening in the most ordinary and everyday ways. You discover the ability to forgive yourself for whatever is holding you back from life. The wild and almost miraculous ability to forgive and give others a new chance begins to make itself known in your relationships. People realize that they are in fact lovable and can love in return and that is a powerful form of God's resurrection power. You realize that you are no longer stuck and make a move forward.

What we all want is a home. In fact, we are each of us called to make home for those around us, to create safety where human thriving happens. To give affection without measure so that people can truly believe that they are loved. We don't just make home for our kin, though that is important, many of us have been the beneficiaries of families that are beyond kinship and blood, families of acceptance and loving care that transcend the ordinary. I wonder where home is for you? I wonder if you can entertain the idea that Jesus is the home that you long for. The Risen One went back to Galilee, back to be home with the disciples that ragtag band of failures, betrayers and passionate ones. He went back to show them that even in death he was their home, that if they were to follow him it would be a wild ride but that they would be at home with the very power of God to walk from life into death and back out into life. In the Resurrection, God offers us a new kind of home that is safe even from the powers of death, a home that flows with compassion, a home where forgiveness moves beyond being right, a home where the steadfast love of God never ceases, where the mercies of Christ never come to end.

To become a follower of Jesus is to find your home in the Risen One, to realize that in rising from the dead Christ has made room for us in the very heart of God. Jesus goes back to Galilee to be with his friends and disciples, to show them the place he has carved out of the universe for them by trampling down death by death, to show them a new home where the end is not death, rather the end is life.

I wonder can we puzzle over the notion of the Risen One as our home? The more we find our home in the compassion and deep love of God, the more we are able to be home for those around us, to make a way of love, to make a way of forgiveness, to make a way of acceptance that is the home so many are longing for. Resurrection is not just something for long ago, it is a home to inhabit here and now. As Mark's gospel proclaims, Jesus goes before us, to our homes, to the ordinary places of our lives to be our home. In the deep mystery of Christ, we find our home with God. If the resurrection of Christ tells us anything, it tells us that God will stop at nothing to welcome us home, to invite us into the life-giving love of God.

We often say that home is where the heart is, the resurrection of Christ proclaims it a slightly different way, our home is in the heart of God.