

April 16, 2017 (Easter Sunrise: 7:00 AM)

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Mark 16:1-8

Just As He Told You: When In Doubt Read the Instructions “Go, Tell”

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It was once the wisdom of seminaries to tell all pastors the value of and teach the three-point sermon. It is not considered all that wise these day, yet nonetheless, I think it would be wise to do so in this Easter Sunrise sermon, because it does have three points.

Why do we love that number three? It may be because it gives us a sense of completion. Let me just say, Trinity. Or could it be because our Moms always seemed to count 1, 2, 3. And, then are those triple crowns in sports. Two points feel like there should have been one more, and then four points feel like nothing more than a random list.

The passage we heard from the Gospel of Mark, this morning, is filled from beginning to end with first. At first, the three women were worried that they could not roll the large stone away from the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus with spices.

Then, when they get to the tomb, they see the stone is rolled away, so they go in, and they find a man with such a nice aura who tells them three things, “Do not be alarmed. Jesus has been raised. He is not here.” Then, he points out where the body of Jesus was – as if that was to reassure them. I don’t know about you, but after someone has died, all I can see is the empty space that they once occupied. My first inclination is not to look out there (pointing outward) or in here (point to my heart).

After the three women, hear the three things he tells them, he then goes on to give them three instructions, “Remember, go, tell”. Now, I know some of you are counting, and given the punctuation you see only two things. Trust me, the instructions are really three-fold. Let me prove it to you.

Remember, he will be going ahead of you to Galilee, just as he said. Sometimes we are afraid, because we forget. We forget that Jesus was not only a promise maker, but was also a promise keeper.

Location, location, location - when it comes to real estate, (and other things too, I might add), it is all that seems to matter. You can have a great house in a lousy location and it will not sell. And you can have a lousy house in a great location, and it will sell.

It is no accident where Jesus chooses to appear. He did not want us to make a shrine and worship him there. He wanted us to go out into the world. It was never Jesus’ intent for us to hang out in one place and never go beyond our four walls. Maybe, that’s why he said he was going to Galilee – now try and have WAV map that for you. It is not a specific location. He did not say, go back to the Upper Room, or meet me on Mount Tabor or how about under the olive tree on the corner of EV and OO streets in Capernaum. Rather, he named a province, a region, not a specific longitude and latitude destination. They were to get out there. You know out there (point finger in a wide sweep outward).

Go. Go. Now, go. Jesus wanted us to get on with it, go. Not stay. Not build a monument. Rather, he wanted us to do anything, but stay at the empty tomb. Why, because this is not the end of the story. Us telling the good news by what we do and don’t do and by what we say and don’t say is the end of the story. It is not

about him being alive and showing himself in one place. It is about him being out there (point outward), and in being in here (point toward chest). Jesus wanted us to not see him in such a limited way, shackled to time and place, but rather for us to know that he lives throughout all time and is in every place.

Remember, go, and tell. Now, according to Mark (please don't be blinded by what you remember from Matthew, Luke and John) the tell didn't happen (and let us not forget Mark is the earliest and first written of the Gospels). Why? Scripture tells us they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Here we go again, we started with fear and we seem to be ending with fear. Of what were they afraid? A good theological guess is that they were afraid the message would not be received because of the packaging it came in. Would you open, much less treasure the contents, if you got a package delivered to your door that was bent, beat up, and had an icky coating on it – probably not. Then, would you be more likely to open a package that had a ticking sound radiating from it?

Could it possibly be, that the women felt they would not be believed? Let's face it, they were only women. I sum Mize that this is a more probable answer than they were shy. You can't have three very different women who are all introverted. No, something caused them to all the sudden become dumb. Maybe, they had been laughed at, scorned, harassed, and belittled so many times, that they felt their efforts would be denigrating once again and even futile. So, why bother?

Yet, God plan was for them and all other marginalized people and groups are for them to be accepted, respected and utilized for nothing less than bringing the greatest news there is to the world.

So, we have to ask ourselves as individuals and as a church, are we willing to listen to the Marys' and Salomes of the world? They are the key for us to understanding, and thus trusting resurrection.

Let me just say here, that is always important to tell the truth, and no one needed to hear more than Peter to hear it. After his three-time denial, he went to a very low place. He then saw himself only as the biggest mess up out there. What would life have been life for Peter, without Easter? Jesus knew Peter needed it. And, Jesus also knew this man who he had given a new name to – changing it from Simon (which means “pebble”) to Peter (which means “rock”) would be the rock (the very foundation) on which he would build his Church. That “and Peter” is essential to have happen for the Simons then Peters of this world.

And last but not least, let me say that the message from the Gospel of Mark is not for the world, no, not yet. But rather, they were to “go and tell” Jesus disciples. Two things intrigue me here, that the message eventually would come from three of his followers, not three of his disciples. Which is all to say, God will choose whom God will choose, and that God sometimes choose those on the periphery to speak to the “in” crowd. And secondly, this is the message we need to tell one another and believe, before we can go and tell the world. The world will eventually need to know, and that we will do from Pentecost on – when the Holy Spirit fall on, fills and empowers us to “Go, and tell”.

Which is all to say, that my four-page sermon, upon its conclusion, still remained having three points: He is risen, he is risen, he is risen!