

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
 East Moline, Illinois  
 Pastor Becky Sherwood  
**April 1, 2018, Easter Sunday**  
 Isaiah 25:6-9, Mark 16:1-8  
**TERROR AND AMAZEMENT**

“The women’s restraint and Mark’s parallel restraint in recounting the Easter story combine to allow a moment of holy awe for the reader of the gospel.”

Bartlett, David L. and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds, *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2 Lent through Eastertide*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2008, p. 357.2.7)

I have avoided preaching on Mark 16 and the gospel writer Mark’s telling of the resurrection of Jesus for all the years of my ministry. I love John’s telling of the story best, as Mary Magdalene meets Jesus outside the tomb and thinks he is the gardener. Then there is the moment of wonder when she realizes that she is standing before Jesus, risen from death, alive. That is the sermon you have heard from me for years.

But this year I decided that it was time to be brave and spend time with a resurrection story that ends with these words: “So the women went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

On this joyous day of celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ what are we supposed to do with trembling terror and amazement...

and silence...silence of all things on this day where each year our sanctuary, and many around the world, echo with the words of the Good News: “Christ is Risen!, he is Risen indeed!”?

What are we supposed to do with these women disciples and their silence?

As I spent time thinking about them this week I began to think about what they had been through.

In one week they have experienced:  
 the joy of Palm Sunday as Jesus’ entered Jerusalem on a donkey,  
 seemingly a conqueror welcomed by the crowds, shouting . “Hosanna, blessed is the One Who Comes In the Name of the Lord.”

They have celebrated the Passover Meal, maybe present there in the Upper Room.  
 They saw or heard of Jesus’ arrest, dragged away like a common criminal from the Mount of Olives.  
 The next day, they stood in the crowds who just days before had cried Hosanna, and who now began to call for the release of Barabbas, and for Jesus to be crucified,  
 “Crucify him, Crucify him” the crowd chanted, and Pilate agreed.

They watched Jesus tried and condemned to death.

They saw their beloved friend and teacher, the one they believed to be the Messiah,  
 his body bloodied by the beatings and whippings,  
 carry his cross through the streets of Jerusalem toward Golgatha, the Place of the Skull.  
 They watched him be nailed up on that cross, and beginning at nine in the morning, they watched him go through the agonies of death, for six hours.

From noon to three p.m. they saw the sky go dark, and then they heard his anguished cry echo through the air: “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?”

And then they heard his loud cry, and then he breathed his last and died.

The death of their friend, their teacher, their healer, their Messiah.  
 The One who said he was the Son of God, silenced.  
 The one who had brought such light and love to the world, for three short years, silenced.  
 Silent and dead on the cross.

Before the sun set, and the Sabbath began, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for his body, and taking it down from the cross he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in the tomb. And a stone was rolled over the entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses were there and saw where the tomb was.

Jesus was dead, he was gone.

This was what their week had held.

Then from Sundown Friday through sundown Saturday it was the Sabbath and they stayed away.

But early in the morning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome went to the tomb to bring the spices and anoint Jesus' body as was the Jewish custom.

They went in the depths of grief, they went expecting to face the devastating despair of anointing the dead body of their friend and teacher.

They found the stone over the tomb rolled away, so they entered the tomb.

There they found an angel in white sitting in the tomb who said: "Do not be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But 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."

And the women begin to tremble,  
     they were confused and shaking all over (CEV),  
     they were distressed and terrified (GNB),  
     and they ran away in silence,  
     saying nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Maybe one of the gifts of Mark's gospel is that he forces us to stop and be amazed with the women. Of course they eventually told the disciples that Jesus was risen, because you and I are here in church this morning, to worship and praise our Savior.

But first they trembled with amazement and terror and were silent, because something that had never happened before in the history of the world had happened. And they were there, face to face with what was happening.

God's beloved Son who died a criminal's death on the cross,  
     who was really and truly dead,  
     who was sealed up in the tomb  
     was now alive, risen, the conqueror of death and the grave.

Maybe silence and terror and amazement are the best first reaction for us this morning.

But we've heard this story so many times, it is so familiar. Some of us have heard it all our lives.

It makes me wish we could capture the experience of hearing this news for the very first time. And Mark's gospel does that in part. It tells us that the news of the resurrection should leave us shaken, amazed, stopped in our tracks, and yes, even fearful, and silent.

It is admittedly a different way to think of the resurrection of Jesus from death. It is a different feeling to this day, if we start with amazement and silence.

But I believe it is good to stop and be amazed each Easter morning. To glimpse, again, with new eye, the miracle of this day.

Jesus, God's Child of Love,  
 who could have crushed the powers of evil and the grave,  
 instead allowed himself to led to death on the cross,  
 allowed himself to lie dead in the tomb,  
 so that God could raise him to new life for you, and for me, and for the world.

The cross and the tomb are not the final word.  
 Love, sacrificed for you and for me, is the final word.  
 Love, which is stronger than the cross and the grave is the final word.  
 Jesus, risen from death to eternal life is the final Word.

How can we not be in awe?

So, let us take the risk of joining those women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, and enter into a time of silence and amazement....

Because maybe that is the best first response to the empty tomb and our Risen Savior.

Will you join me in SILENCE as we reflect on what we have heard and seen this Easter?

Let us be silent and amazed....let us pray.

AMEN... and now having been in silence before the Good News of this day  
 let us stand and sing with exuberant joy the Good News we share!

**Hymn #238**

*Thine Is the Glory*

**NOTES:****Translations of Mark 16:8****The Message**

<sup>8</sup>They got out as fast as they could, beside themselves, their heads swimming. Stunned, they said nothing to anyone.

**CEV**

<sup>8</sup>When the women ran from the tomb, they were confused and shaking all over. They were too afraid to tell anyone what had happened.

**JB PHILLIPS**

<sup>8</sup>And they got out of the tomb and ran away from it. They were trembling with excitement. They did not dare to breathe a word to anyone.

**CEB**

<sup>8</sup>Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.<sup>[a]</sup>

**Good News**

<sup>8</sup>So they went out and ran from the tomb, distressed and terrified. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

**American Standard**

<sup>8</sup>And they went out, and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them: and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.

**Green Machine**, An Analysis of the Greek New Testament, trembling, bewilderment, distraction)