

“Yes, it can be!” Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back-- it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Today for our Easter meditations we have the very end of the Gospel according to Mark. At least it appears to be the case, that Mark's account actually ends with these verses.

This is a very strange ending for the Gospel account. You know that Matthew ends his Gospel account with risen Jesus giving the last command to His disciples. ‘Go and make disciples from all nations!’

Luke similarly ends His Gospel with the risen Jesus ascending into heaven before the eyes of His disciples. John describes risen Jesus appearing to His disciples several times, even eating and drinking together with them.

Mark concludes his Gospel, we can say, in rather strange a way. He describes these women going to the tomb early in the morning. To do what? To anoint Jesus body. To anoint their crucified teacher.

Wondering among themselves who is going to remove this huge stone from the tomb. Then they unexpectedly find that the stone is already removed. Entering the tomb they see this young man sitting dressed in a white robe.

Jesus isn't there. Where is He? Who took Him? Who is this young man? Of course they were distressed. Where is Jesus body? Where is it? ‘Don't be distressed! Or, stop worrying! You seek Jesus, right?’

‘The one, who was crucified, right? He is not here. What?! He is not here. He has risen! See, the tomb is empty! Go and tell His disciples that He will meet them in Galilee.’

What did they do? **“They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”**

It is easy to understand these women. The tomb was open. The dead body of Jesus was gone. Some stranger speaks to them and tells that Jesus has risen, and sends them with this message to His disciples. Of course, there were very good reasons to be afraid.

This is how Mark ends his gospel account. “They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” And that’s it. And that’s it?! That’s it. Isn’t this a rather strange message from Mark, isn’t it?

How are we supposed to understand it? No risen Jesus? No Jesus appearing to His disciples so that they could see Him and be assured that this unbelievable story is true? None of this. Just “ they were afraid”.

You see, every Gospel has its own distinct emphasis. Something that the authors wanted us to understand. Some specific message. So, what then is Mark’s message? What is he telling us?

He teaches us two things - **promise and trust**. Yes, promise and trust. Or, in a way we can say that he teaches us what the Christian faith is about. People often misunderstand what Christian faith is.

They often take that it an opposite of knowing. Faith versus knowing. Not at all! Quite contrary. In fact, our Christian faith is based, it is deeply rooted in knowing. That’s why we can say that our faith is much better characterized by verb ‘trust’ that by simply ‘believe’. Trust.

Our faith is not about believing something, because we don’t actually know, it is about trusting, because, in fact, we actually know. It is about trusting for we know very well. What do I mean by all of this? Let’s look again at what Mark wrote.

When Mark wrote his gospel account, of course, everyone knew that Jesus has risen, His disciple, including these women had seen Him. Those who read Mark’s gospel account, they knew about Jesus resurrection.

So what was the point for Mark not to describe Jesus resurrection, but simply leave his gospel account open ended? What did he want to emphasize? Promise and trust. Let me explain.

The Old Testament from the very beginning contains many promises of God. The most important among them, the promise about the Saviour. About the Messiah, about the one who will reconcile us with God.

Who will take upon Himself our sins, who will restore the brokenness of creation. About the One who somehow will be very much like - God Himself. Along the way, as the Old Testament testifies, God Yahweh fulfilled many promises so that we would believe that He will fulfil also this on.

The time came when this promise was fulfilled, whatever strange it seemed. A man was born, in an unusual way, as was predicted a long time ago, He lived among us and did things which no human being could do. His name was Jesus. Jesus from Nazareth.

He had a power to command entire creation, and everything in creation obeyed Him. Many begun to believe that He indeed is the promised Messiah. The promised Saviour. But then He spoke strange things.

He said that He is going to be rejected, will suffer and die. And on the third day will rouse again. He said that this was the reason He came. His disciples heard these strange words. Many times.

They just didn't get what He was saying. His opponents heard these words and they remembered them. That's why they asked Pilate to put guards at the tomb. So that there is not messing around with disappearing bodies.

They all heard Him teaching about His death and resurrection from the dead. Jesus used to compare it with what had happen to Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.

They all heard it. Many times. Why didn't they listen to it? Why didn't they get it? It's very simple. Because they were smart people. They were as smart as people are today. They knew that no one, no one could defeat death. Once you are dead, you are dead.

Once you are buried, they is no coming back. They is no rising from the dead. They all knew it, for that is so obvious. No one had ever risen from the dead. That's why this very strange promise of Jesus didn't make any sense to them.

It couldn't make any sense for this is not how things happen in this world. That's why these women came to anoint Jesus body. On the third day. That's why they were so afraid not finding Him.

Who could imagine, who could believe that He will indeed raise from the dead? No one. But everything happen exactly as Jesus had promised.

The fulfilment of this promise, Jesus resurrection, was the ultimate proof that He is indeed in control over everything in creation. Even over death. Especially over death. It was the ultimate proof that we can trust His promises.

This is the point that Mark wants to make. That we can, that we should trust Jesus' promises. Not trust blindly, but to trust because we know He has authority over everything. He has authority over the laws of creation. He spoke them into existence.

He has control over death, our ultimate enemy, for He defeated it. He rose from the dead, in new glorified body, He appeared to His disciples to prove that we can trust Him. After His resurrection He appeared to more than five hundred eyewitnesses. They all saw Him.

Easter is not about believing something we don't know. It is not about blind faith. It is about knowing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is capable of fulfilling His promises whatever strange they may seem to us.

It is about trusting those promises that He has given to us, because He has proven His ability to fulfil them. *What exactly then it means for our Christian faith here and now?* A lot.

When your pastor says these words, publicly or in a private confession - 'I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit', someone can say that it is not possible.

How can a man forgive someone's sins?! Then we can answer, - yes, it is possible, for this is exactly what Jesus commanded us to do and promised that whomever we'll forgive their sins, they will be forgiven. It is what the Church does.

When someone is baptized, the Holy Spirit is given to this person. Their sins are forgiven and they are made children of God and heirs of God's Kingdom.

Someone can say, it can't be, it is just a water, it is just a ritual. Then we can say, - yes, it can be, for this is what Jesus commanded us to do, and this is what He promises our baptism with do for us.

When we come to receive the Holy Communion, then Jesus Christ, the Holy God Himself is present among us and shares with us His life giving body and blood in bread and wine.

Someone can say, it can't be, for it is simply a bread and a wine, how could you believe that you actually are united with God. That He Himself is physically present. It can't be. And we say to it, - yes, it can be, for this is what Jesus commanded us to do and this is what He Himself promised.

We say that one day we will be with Jesus, and He will create a new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death, nor pain, not sorrow, only joy and peace in God's presence. We'll have new bodies, new perfect bodies. We'll have this great feast that Isaiah wrote about.

Someone can say, that it can't be, things like this don't happen. What will we say? Yes, it can be, for this is what Jesus Christ, the Son of God promised. We trust His promises for He rose from the dead and proved that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Him.

So He can do with this Universe, with this time, space, matter, energy, with these laws who hold everything together whatever He wants. We know He can deliver what He has promised. For He is God the Creator. He is your God.

Then someone can say – why would God choose you? Who are you? How are you better than others? You may have done so many things wrong. You may not be better than anyone else. May be you are even worse.

It can't be that God has chosen you and given all these promised to you. It can't be. And what will you say? Yes, it can be. Of course, we don't deserve it, we are not worthy of this, but because Jesus has promised, we can trust Him.

We know that He will fulfil His promises. That's it. This is what our Easter faith is about. This is what Mark wanted to emphasize. That our trust is strongly rooted in Jesus promises.

Even if He speaks about things, which don't make sense to us today, even if He promises something that has never happened before, we know that He will deliver what He has promised.

This is our Easter faith. This is our hope. This is our trust. And you know, sometimes you may be afraid as these women were. You may sometimes stay silent when you are sent to speak.

You may fail your expectations and expectations of others. You may be weak, you may be doubtful, you may be worse than others. It may happen, but it doesn't change a thing.

For risen Jesus Christ promised to be with you whatever happens, and we know, we can trust Him. For He is risen, He is risen, indeed, and when the time comes, He will raise you and you will see Him as He is.

Amen.