

*An Unfinished Easter*  
Mark 16:1-8  
April 12, 2009  
First Federated Church  
Peoria, Illinois  
The Rev. Dr. Forrest L. Krummel, Jr.

One of my favorite movies is “Bruce Almighty.”

In it a hard luck small city, self-absorbed news reporter name Bruce,  
played by Jim Carey,  
tells God, played by Morgan Freeman,  
that the Almighty is not doing his job very well.

So God says fine.

If you think you can do better,  
you be God for a while.  
Well, Bruce does and  
he really makes a mess of things.

He comes back to God with hat in hand  
and a humbled,  
wiser spirit.

That’s when God has a real heart to heart with Bruce.

God tells Bruce,

“Your problem, Bruce, is that you spend too much time looking up.  
All the things you've been doing with the power I gave you –  
they're not miracles –  
just magic tricks.”

“A single mom who's working two jobs and still finds time to take her kid to soccer  
practice,  
that's a miracle.

A teenager who says no to drugs and yes to an education,  
that's a miracle.”

“People want me to do everything for them.

But what they don't realize is they have the power.

You wanna see a miracle, son?

(You) Be the miracle.”

That movie came to mind as I studied and reflected upon the Easter story as it is found in  
Mark’s gospel.

To many Mark is an unfinished gospel  
with an unfinished Easter story.

The oldest manuscripts that we have of Mark has the gospel ending with verse 8.

Later generations, though, wanted to know  
what happened next?

Did the women ever tell the story?

They wanted the gospel to match the other gospels of

Matthew,

Luke and

John.

Therefore, we have a shorter and longer ending to Mark's gospel at a later time.

You see them as footnotes in our pew Bible.

I think, though, that Mark intentionally ended his gospel with verse 8

because like Morgan Freeman challenging Jim Carrey

in Bruce Almighty,

God challenges us—

the community of faith—

to continue what began with Jesus.

We are to write the next chapters of the story of Easter;

the story of new life,

the story of hope,

redemption

and ultimately

Resurrection.

Our gospel lesson reminds us that whenever God breaks into our lives

our first response is one of fear.

That is one of the ways that we know it to be a God moment;

the challenge is too big for us to do alone.

We see this in the call of Abraham when God said

Do not be afraid for I will make you the father of many nations;

We see it in the call of Joshua when God said

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

We see it in Matthew's story of Joseph as God said

Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife;

and we see in when the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary the mother of Jesus

Do not be afraid, O most favored one.

The women went to the tomb knowing exactly what they were going to do.

They knew the routine

the ritual.

They were going to anoint the body of Jesus because he had been hastily buried due to the Sabbath.

Their biggest worry was how to get into the tomb for

as was the custom

a great stone had been rolled over the mouth of the cave in  
order to seal it.

I imagined that their hearts skipped a beat when they arrived at the tomb in the shadowy  
time the separates morning from night

and discovered that the stone had already been rolled away!

Walking into the tomb they saw a young man—

an angel some writers say—

clothed in white.

He was sitting there

as if he had been waiting for them.

“Don't be afraid,” he said.”

“Don't be alarmed.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified.  
He has risen,  
he is not here,"

the angel said indicating the place where  
Jesus laid.

Many of us have become so familiar with the Easter story that it ceases to startle us.  
But imagine how they must have heard the angel's words.

"It is one thing to come to terms with death,  
to live with it and accept it.

We all have to do that.

It's quite another thing, though,

to be faced with the hard reality that this is how God acts,  
how (God) works out the (Divine) purpose  
for the world—

for you and me...

God does not save us *from* suffering and death.

(God) saves us *through* it.

'Take up your cross and follow me'

was no longer (just) one possibility,

one option among many,

to be held at arm's length

alongside some other less stringent options."

**But there was a second reason, I believe, the women were afraid.**

On Friday it seemed as if all that Jesus stood for had been defeated.

When given the choice,

the world chose Barabbas.

The demonic forces of hatred,

corruption,

violence

and death seemed to have had  
the last word.

When Jesus' broken body was placed in the tomb

it seemed as if His life had been a brief,

glorious

and ultimately futile one.

With his death,

those who knew Him best

were able to bury their uncertain faith,

their petty quarrels about who would be the greatest in the  
Kingdom of God,

their jealousies,

their impatience with Him,

as well as the ugly and painful scenes of

their betrayal,

abandonment and denial.

All of these things they could bury,

and, given enough time,  
may even forget how they failed him.

***But*** if He was alive, then all of those things were alive, too.

And that is a frightening thought!

It's like coming face to face with that of which you are ashamed.

Easter's word is not

"Be of good cheer".

No, Easter's word is

"Be not afraid."

"There is no fear in love"

the writer of I John once penned,

"for perfect love casts out fear."

I love the writings of C.S. Lewis.

Though they can be quite challenging.

In one of our Wednesday night Lenten worship services I shared some reflections on his allegorical story *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

In the story one of the main characters is about to meet the Christ figure—

Anslan,

a Lion,

the King of the Jungle

for the first time.

In preparing to meet Anslan she innocently asks,

"Is he quite safe" ...

"Safe? ...

who said anything about safe?!

Of course He isn't safe!

But He is *good!*"

He isn't *safe*, but He is *good*.

The angel told the women that Jesus would meet the disciples in Galilee.

Galilee.

And, if Mark's story of Easter seems unfinished

it is only because we are invited to go to Galilee, too.

In many ways the story of Easter is still being written

and will continue to be written until

*every knee shall bow*

*and tongue confess*

*that He is Lord*

*to the glory of the Father.*

So, where is Galilee?

It is the place where the Risen One waits for us;

It is wherever

the weak are strengthened,

the hungry are fed,

the thirsty are given,

the leper is touched and cleansed,

the naked are clothed,

the poor are given dignity,  
the forgotten are remembered  
the broken are healed,  
and the lost are found.

So for us,  
let's go to Galilee  
for there we will find the One whom we seek.  
Amen.