



Easter Sunday-April 4, 2021  
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish  
Mark 16:1-8

## "Overcoming Fear"

-Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

*Dear friends in Christ, grace, and peace to you from God our father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen*

*Have all of you heard the Easter story before? Have you ever wondered or tried to count how many times you have heard the Easter story? What would be your guess? And how would come you up with a number? You have heard about the death and resurrection of Jesus not just on Easter Sunday each year, but you also confess that you believe in this Easter story at least once in every worship service when you confess your faith. Each time you confess that Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried and that he descended into hell and on the third day rose again, you have proclaimed the story of Easter to others and heard it again for itself. Then think of all the funerals you have attended to hear the Easter story repeated. In fact, every sermon should be a story of death and resurrection. Some of us may have heard the Easter Story over 4000 times by now. Therefore, you have not responded in fear to hearing this story as you just heard these three women did. I could tell by the expression of the faces of the children as they came up to for the children's sermon today, that they too have heard the Easter story several times already. In fact, the youngest of the children today, likely have heard the story of Easter more times than the three women that went to the tomb to find Jesus on the first Easter.*

*The young man who was sitting on the right side of the place where Jesus had been laid in the tomb could also tell by the expression on the faces of these women that they had not heard the Easter story very many times. The young man didn't have to ask these women, "How are you today?" Nor did they need to verbally confess to the young man the fears that were racing through their minds. The expressions on their faces were enough. The young man saw that these women were alarmed. Before these women could say a word, the young man said, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.*

*Not finding the corpse of Jesus in the tomb was not the first detail that Mark records for us to inform us why these women were alarmed. These women had gone to the tomb as early as the sabbath law would allow them to do. They got up early on the first day of the week and waited for the sun to rise. On their way to the tomb, they began to wonder and discuss how they were going to enter the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus because of the large stone that had been rolled in front of the opening. But, instead of being relieved that the stone had already been moved for them, their fears only increased when the stone had been rolled away. Their minds went from the problem of how to move the stone from the entrance to what they would find when they looked into the tomb. They might have wondered if wild animals had further desecrated the body of the crucified Jesus. Or they may have wondered if someone had now stolen the body of Jesus that everyone else had deserted.*

*However, their fears did not cause them to run, but instead we are told they entered the tomb. Mark doesn't record a race between the disciples to see who could get to the place where Jesus had been laid first as the gospel of John describes. After a quick visual survey of the inside of the tomb and not finding Jesus, but finding another young man, scripture tells us that they were alarmed.*

*These short 8 verses where Mark records his Easter account is not short of details. Mark describes this unnamed young man further by describing him as dressed in a white robe. There are some who believe and for*

*good reason that this young man dressed in a white robe is the same young man who became known as the naked fugitive who fled the scene when Jesus was arrested. Mark alone tells of a certain man who was wearing a linen cloth and when bystanders attempted to catch him, they caught the linen cloth, and the mysterious naked man ran off and we think is never heard from again. It is possible that these three women had also seen this young man run off naked now find him dressed in a white robe in the tomb where they expected to find Jesus.*

*This young unknown man begins to preach to these women the Easter story. He told them that he knew why they were there. He said, you are looking for Jesus... This young man told them that Jesus had already told them the Easter story. He said 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. Then after he finishes his Easter sermon, he commissions them to proclaim this message to Jesus' disciples and specifically to Peter.*

*We don't know exactly how many times these three women had heard the Easter story, but Mark tells us that they still do not believe it. If they still were not certain about where Jesus was, how was anyone else going to believe their Easter story? Mark ends his Easter story saying that these women were overcome with fear and told no one.*

*You and I have the advantage of Paul. You have heard the Easter story for more years and many more times than the two Mary's and Salome. The Holy Spirit has called you to come and hear the good news of Easter for several years and again today. You didn't stay home in fear but wanted to have any fears that you might have overcome with the good news of the risen Jesus Christ.*

*Mark ends his gospel with the words, "and they were afraid". If I were Mark's teacher or editor after reading his ending to the Easter Story, I would have told him to rewrite it. You can't end the Easter story with people in fear uncertain of where Jesus is and leaving you wondering what he is thinking about you! However, Mark does not end his gospel with an absent or fugitive Jesus. Mark told the women, "but go, tell his disciples and Peter that **he is going ahead of you** to Galilee".*

*Jesus did not stay in the tomb to wait for you **to find him** like an empty plastic Easter egg. Jesus rose from the grave just as he said he would do. Jesus has gone ahead of everyone. Jesus went ahead and left the tomb before these three women came to anoint his body. Jesus went ahead of his disciples and Peter **to find them** to deliver the good news of Easter to them in person with the words, "Peace be with you, your sins are forgiven." Jesus went ahead and found Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome and saw the fear in these three women and turned their fear to faith with his voice saying, "Do not fear, I have been raised just as I said, for Peter and for you."*

*Today, we begin the season of Easter. This is a season that has no ending. Jesus has risen from the dead and has left the tomb empty except for the young man who proclaimed this good news to the women. The good news that Jesus is on the loose again, finding you and proclaiming to you, salvation is yours. Jesus has found you again today in his word and in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "Do not be afraid."*

*Alleluia! Christ is Risen.*

***Christ is Risen indeed. Alleluia Amen***