

“Jesus is Coming for You”
Rev. Ben Heimach-Snipes
Morgan Park Presbyterian Church

Mark 16:1-8

Jesus is coming for you!

Jesus is coming for you, bringing a message of Hope – a message that you are loved – a message that your sins are forgiven – a message that you can be transformed with God.

Throughout his life, Jesus enacts God’s grace by forgiving the sins of all who seek him – healing the powerful and the marginalized - bringing all into a life of faith. But remaining faithful is a challenge for each of us in different ways.

In our scripture lesson for today, all the sinners – all those usual suspects who betray Jesus – have already left the scene - believing the story was over.

All the men protecting their positions of power have gone home triumphantly believing they have won the day for themselves: The religious leaders in Jerusalem who sought to preserve their tradition and power by turning against Jesus and the Romans who responded to political challenge with violence slept comfortably in their beds.

Many more men stumbled home, defeated and afraid - believing their sins had cost them too much. There was Peter, the icon of faithfulness whose fear of exposure led him to lie about his connection to Jesus. There was Judas, who sold his beloved Jesus for silver - unable to believe in Jesus’ loving vision of the kingdom of God.

When it comes to identifying with the sinner, we have many men to choose from – and they all appear to be absent from today’s Easter scene.

But then, just as the rituals of mourning were about to begin for the women who had devoted themselves to Jesus, they discovered that they too had betrayed him. By believing that the violent death of Jesus claimed by the Roman Empire would have the last word for their ministry, these loving women - who would go to the ends of the Earth for Jesus - had forgotten the hope that Jesus had continued to teach them.

The angel kindly explained to them, “You will see him, just as he told you.”

So in the narrative of Holy Week, we find two different postures for humanity with respect to who we are in relation to crucifixion and resurrection. The first is a humanity that falls away from God, unable to bear the sight of God’s brokenness and the grief of human existence like Peter. The second is a humanity that crawls toward him in the dark, reaching for his body, knowing that it is putrid, and in doing so, takes on the full weight of life’s inevitable terrors.

In the miracle of the resurrection, God comes to us in both places. God breaks through the wall that our flight from God has constructed around us, just as God also breaks through the waves of grief that flow out from us when we refuse to flee from the horror and stand speechless and undone in the presence of human brokenness. Both of these provide an honest account of who we are as people of faith. We are both the faithless abandoners and killers of God and the faithful mourners who are unable to fathom that Jesus lives.

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Mark gives us a powerful account of God's good news by giving us these traumatized, determined women as witnesses to God's truth - it is not just arrogance or falsehood or violent boasting that God redeems. It is also the brokenness of the downtrodden who cannot believe that their life could be important to anyone, let alone to God.

Jesus is coming for us - who turn away from God's love for our own profit AND Jesus is coming for us who have been seized by terror and amazement.

Jesus is coming for you whether you suffer from too much boastful pride or you believe there is no service to low for you to enact. Jesus is coming for you - whether you trust confidently that your sins are forgiven or struggle each day to accept yourself for who you are. Jesus is coming for you because God's love is greater than any power of this world. Jesus overcame death through the miracle of resurrection to proclaim God's saving grace for all the world.

During the season of Lent, we prayed to God that we might be transformed by faith. We presented God with the things that hold us back from a deeper life of faith AND we presented God with our deepest hopes for a future in the Body of Christ. Over these seven weeks, we allowed these conflicting forces in our lives to form together as our prayer to God. And like nourishing compost in our garden, we have been opened to transformation.

Our resurrecting God lives today in us as the body of Christ. Our resurrecting God transforms these prayers of deep need and inspiring hope into the living acts of love and peace and justice that drive our future together. Our resurrecting God lives and grows in the love that we share with each other. Our resurrecting God lives and grows in the love that we extend to a stranger.

Jesus is risen today.

Jesus is coming for you today.

Jesus is coming to you hungry that you might feed him.

Jesus is coming to you thirsty that you might share your drink.

Jesus is coming to you as a stranger that you might welcomed.

As someone naked that you might clothe

As someone sick that you might take care of.

As a prisoner that you might visit.

Jesus Christ is risen today and coming for you. He comes with the Grace of God that is for the whole world. Jesus Christ, our savior, is here for us today.

Amen.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.