

Easter Sunday, April 8, 2012
Acts 10: 34-43, Mark 16: 1-8

Called to be Witnesses

It has been shown by many studies that eyewitnesses are often inaccurate in what they remember and report when interviewed by police or other investigators.

Two people can see the same robbery and one will say that the thief had brown hair, wore glasses and had a beard. The other will say that the man was blond and clean-shaven, with no glasses.

Add in a third witness and the third account will describe someone with sunglasses and long gray hair with a mustache.

Our minds can play tricks on us. Our memories can fail. Things can happen so fast that we don't see what we think we saw.

What is true and real? What do we know for a fact? HOW do we know that what we know is right? Maybe what I know to be true is not at all the same as what you know. Are we reliable witnesses to anything in our lives?

Mark's account of the Gospel tells us that on that first Easter morning, three women went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid to rest. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to anoint his body for burial.

There had not been time to do that on Good Friday. The Passover holiday was beginning even as he was placed in the tomb, and no work could be done on any Sabbath, especially not on a High Holy Day. So this task had been postponed until Sunday.

Mark tells us that the three women went together. John tells us it was Mary Magdalene alone. Matthew says that it was Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." Luke doesn't specify a number, but reports that two Marys, Joanna and "the other women" went.

So how many women went?

And did Peter and John have a footrace to the tomb after Mary Magdalene told them the tomb was empty, as John reports? Or did the women tell no one because they were afraid, as Mark says?

It's all so very confusing! Which account is correct? Which witness has it right? How can we know what to believe?

In any investigation into any incident, the importance of details need to be ranked by importance. Some details have no bearing on the case. Some may be relevant but not as important as others. Do the exact words anyone said matter? Maybe, maybe not.

Could eyewitness accounts vary because there is actually more than one suspect? Maybe, maybe not.

What is important? Well, that something happened. Something specific happened in a certain place, at a given time, with a particular result.

So what happened on Easter morning?

They all agree that Jesus Christ was no longer dead, no longer in the tomb!
And this is a hard thing to believe.

When we were children, at some point we learned that dead is dead. A pet died or a grandparent or someone else. And we learned that being dead is not like being sick. You don't get better from being dead.

And being dead is not like going on a long trip, either. You don't come back from being dead.

Yet here we have the Bible telling us that Jesus Christ did in fact come back from being dead!

Is it a myth? Or a fairy tale? Could it possibly be the truth?

Many people the world over believe that Jesus Christ really did come back from death. I am one of them.

And my reason is this---- I have experienced the presence of the risen Christ in my own life. I know the love, the peace, the friendship of Christ for myself. It is not hearsay.

I know that the tomb is empty because of the many times Christ has stood beside me, has supported me from behind, has led me from in front and has picked me up and carried me.

I know it because Christ has taken care of me when I have struggled. He has led me into my current calling. He has comforted me when I grieve, loved me when I felt alone, provided for my needs, and been my example and my inspiration. Christ is my rock and my redeemer, every day and every way.

Someone who is dead and sealed in a tomb cannot do that. Only a risen, living Savior, a real and powerful Son of God can do that.

And I stand here this morning, as I do every week, as a witness to that.

I am a witness to the truth that Christ is alive every day, whatever I do, wherever I go, because without Christ I could do nothing, without Christ I AM nothing! Without Christ, I would have given up long ago.

The tomb is empty, my brothers and sisters!

In our reading from Acts this morning, we heard Peter saying that the people then were all witnesses to all that Jesus Christ had done in Judea

and in Jerusalem, and that some of them had witnessed to his resurrection because they saw him and ate with him after Easter!

We are also witnesses to all that Jesus Christ has done, not in Judea or Jerusalem. We weren't there!

But we are witnesses to all that Christ has done in our lives, the ways that we have been changed by Christ's love, the times he has lifted us up and helped us to continue on, the moments when we have deeply accepted that Christ came to save us from the power of sin and death because he loves us.

We are witnesses to all that Christ has done for us, here and now, always and forever.

Each one of us has our own account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Each one of us is a witness. Even though our accounts are not identical in the details, the important facts are the same. That God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten son that all those who believe will never die.

What Good News do you have to share with others? What is your eyewitness account of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

We all have a story to share. Find a way to share yours with others. You never know---yours might be the words that someone else needs to hear!

Christ is risen----HE IS RISEN INDEED!!

Hallelujah! HALLELUJAH! Amen!