

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission

What Has Changed?



Easter has dawned, but what has changed? The world remains shrouded in fear and isolation, does it not? We remain imprisoned in our homes, and dread and uncertainty still reign, don't they? It does not feel like the chains of death and despair have been broken. Rather, the pall weighs heavy, suffocating, still. So, what has changed now that his Easter has dawned as it has for more than 2,000 years? It is an honest question worthy of asking. What has changed?

How we come to the empty tomb surely has changed, hasn't it? Because COVID-19 has changed us. And, because we have changed, isn't it possible that we might be ready to enter his story of love, redemption, and promise in a new and deeper way? For in this space of fear and uncertainty, as we stand on the rim of the gaping tomb, can we not receive his gift as they did? Not as we have done before with Alleluias and sound of trumpet, but on the rim, in the gray and colorless morning light, as they did? Filled with fear and trepidation just as they did, with no understanding of what the future might bring? As together, we await the words we long to hear: "He has been raised. He is not here... [h]e is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So, much has changed.

Has the story ended?

Each of the four gospels ends differently. But for me, this Easter, I find myself standing before Mark's empty tomb with Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. There beside them, not understanding, fearful, and running into the dawn saying nothing to anyone in this time of pandemic. Mark's gospel seems fitting for this time, because Mark chooses to 'end' his gospel with honest fear and trepidation. For the first ending to Mark's gospel, the only ending to his gospel for the first 300 years, reads as translated from the Greek: "*They fled from the tomb saying nothing to anyone. They were afraid because....*"

I love this particular 'ending' to Mark's gospel, because his gospel doesn't actually end. His last words are "*They were afraid because....*" The story continues with his incomplete sentence. I love the way Mark invites us into the story and asks us, challenges us, to look deep inside and acknowledge our own fears. And, then he urges us to step over those fears and follow Jesus to the Galilee. Because, Mark tells us the story continues in and through us as witnesses to God's love and presence in this world, in this fearful world of ours. For Mark, there is no need for post-resurrection sightings, because he assures us that we shall see Jesus in the Galilee, in spite of our fears and uncertainties, just as he told us we would. We shall see him. We shall.

How is the story changing us, changing you?

Mark asks us, challenges us: Now, that you have heard the story in this time and place—in *your* time and *your* place—what has changed? Will you flee from the empty tomb and say nothing to anyone? Or will you journey on, following him to the Galilee? The Galilee, the place where he brought sight to the blind, made the lame walk, where he stilled the raging sea? The Galilee, every place in this world where he continues to bring healing where there is pain, love where there is fear, light where there is darkness. The places where if we follow, each of us will see him. Mark promises us. We surely shall.

I know in this Eastertide, I will be sitting with Mark's bold and stark questions in a new way. I am asking myself, in this time of rawness, in this time when so much has been stripped away, "How might I allow God to continue his story of pain and redeeming love through me now in this time of fear? What does his call look like in my life now that so much has changed? What am I afraid of as I stand on the edge of his empty tomb? How might I step over my fears to follow him to the Galilee? How is he changing, transforming my life, even in, or especially in, this pandemic?"

My hope is that you will join me in asking these questions, making them your own, as together we listen for how he might be speaking uniquely to each of us, as we stand on the edge of his empty tomb in this day's early morning light.

And, as we sit with the questions and listen for his voice, may we sense him drawing us near to him. Closer to him and to each other.

He Is Risen.

Thank you for joining me in this time of reflection, this time in which I know he shall continue to write his story in and through our lives, soothing ours and others' pain, bringing forth new life in and through us as he always has. As he always surely shall. For everything has changed. For He Is Risen. He Is Risen Indeed.

And, may we pray that we will soon meet each other and our Risen Lord in Guatemala. Our beloved Guatemala, this Galilee, where we all have encountered him so many times before. Where we shall meet him yet again.

With gratitude and all to God's honor, glory, and praise.

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