# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“He is Alive!”**

**Mark 16:1-8**

 **April 4, 2021**

Our Easter text is Mark 16:1-8.

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.” The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

Saturday had been one of the darkest days of their lives. Jesus, the one they had come to know as a friend and believe in as the Son of God, was dead. It was the Sabbath, a day for rest, but it had become a day of restlessness, of shattered hopes, broken dreams, desolate spirits, and wounded and frightened hearts. The future looked grim and foreboding. But, they had a job to do. So, very early on Sunday morning, the three women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body. And, as they went, they were aware of yet another problem, another difficulty to add to the almost crushing burden of the last couple of days, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”

All of us have dark days in our lives, days when our relationship with our spouse or child is a struggle, days when we come face to face with our failing health, days when we deal with bad financial news. We live in a broken world, and we all face grave and sad disappointments in life. It’s here – after all our prayers and all our hopes – that we wonder, “Is God alive?” It seems from all evidence that either God is dead or he just isn’t listening. It’s at these times that God calls on us to go to the tomb and see for ourselves if he really is alive.

Like the women in our story, we arrive at the tomb preoccupied with the obstacles of life. What will we find when we get there? Will we find a dead body, confirming our suspicion that what we’ve been told about a God who cares for us is nothing but a fairy tale? Or, will we be confronted, as the women were, with the mystery of an empty tomb? We won’t find Jesus standing outside the tomb making promises to do away with all our troubles. But, according to the witness of the young man in the tomb, he is alive. He is risen from the dead, and he invites us to leave the dark, empty places in our lives and join him in the light of a new day that we may live in and through him.

Easter is the promise of renewed hope and reenergized life. Jesus went through a terrible darkness, and he was raised into new life. He is alive and well and, in spite of the dark times that you and I go through, with Christ we also can be alive and well. This is the message that God gives us on Easter, and this is the message that he invites us to share with others. He loves us. He has forgiven us. He invites us into a life of prayer and service – a dynamic, ongoing relationship with his Son. He wants us and all people to know the truth that Christ is risen and that he lives to give us life in all its abundance.

Whatever those women were afraid of, they got over it. We know that the end of Mark’s gospel is not the end of their journey with Jesus. As the other gospel writers affirm, eventually they believed, beginning a new life with Jesus and spreading the good news of a risen Savior. Following Jesus did not take away all the problems of their lives, and it won’t do that for us, either. But following Jesus transforms our perspective. We begin to see our struggles in a new light, a light that begins to dispel the darkness in which we have found ourselves. In our tough places, he is with us. In our restlessness, he will bring us rest. He is alive! That makes all the difference.