

1 Easter B – Building a New Normal – The Promise

Resurrection not Resuscitation -- Can't go back to the way it was – it wasn't working! – we actually go from one normal to what will be the next normal when we decide what it is (having been informed by what we just went through!)

A main reason the church exists is to proclaim that there is a Promise which can lead, guide and help us through the current trauma/change and into a new normal – a step into a future closer to what is envisioned in the first place.

Future - We are beckoned into this new future personally – Mary is called by name – we have a voice urging us into a future where the days are better than today with its stresses and strains. And if Jesus comes to us as to Mary through the senses then that is why it is helpful to be part of a spiritual community – moving aside the agendas of the day and opening ourselves to what God might do to call us forward.

Mystery - God works in the mystery of darkness – we don't know how or what happened. Certain circumstances arise, medications are discovered, an openness finally brings about a willingness to go for counseling, a person in the family finally has a situation that brings our biases into a reconsideration – and something different happens for our future. We may sluff off these mysterious opportunities as just how things happen.....and yet how often does it seem to occur or we take advantage of these circumstances occurring at just the right time? Certainly not always but often enough this happens. In the dark mysteries of life things happen and if we are watching, ready, prepared – we can take advantage of them and find a new path forward.

Mark's gospel - Mark's gospel ends with this type of mystery. The people are scared and silent. COVID-19 hit and our entire world was stunned into fear and silence. What would happen next? How serious was this? How many would die and how close might it come to us? Will we actually turn into one of those Hollywood Zombie movies.....taking a vaccine that has an unforeseen consequence and turn into something even worse? The Easter we want has not arrived in the gospel of Mark – there are only hints and glimpses of the possibility. The Promise we eagerly want to be real was already shown to us in the climax of Mark's gospel back in the 9th chapter – the middle of the book – on the mountain of transfiguration. And that's all we'll get! That and all of the teaching, the miracles, the healings, the confrontations with injustice and power, the vulnerable courageousness, and the loving partnership offered for seeker (like Nicodemus) and soulmates (like his 3 closest disciples – Peter, James and John) alike. Mark's gospel ends the way the pandemic seems to be ending.....

Ending COVID-19 – With the Vaccine here – and the mad urgency upon us when our window opens to get the shot – we also have an awareness that a new normal is coming. We can't go BACK to some old way – that's what got us where we are. So where are we going?a

place filled with questions. What will work look like now? And shopping? And dating? And school? And how safe is it really to travel and be with others? Will I still wear a mask or should I in certain places or experiences? Closer to home and with how COVID has impacted our relationships – how will we re-establish contact, communication....will it be the same patterns that somehow at times left us feeling unsettled and wary of those relationships or will we seek out a new way, a better way, a more healthy and warm and affectionate and encouraging way of relating? Things will be different – the kids and us will for the rest of our lives mark time by pre or post COVID. What kind of future then will we want and work toward?

The Promise of Easter mystery – Jesus has gone ahead and the women are told to go find him in Galilee. The same invitation is offered this Easter. God has gone ahead in Promise. God is always ahead of us in Promise. Wherever our decisions or circumstances take us God promises to be there. Its not a perfect plan for us but rather a God who travels with us into the uncertainty of our lives. Whenever we are afraid of an ending that has arrived, God promises to be there. Whenever we think we can't make that new desired and envisioned future come true, God is there urging us, pointing us to resources, surrounding us with friends and encouragement to make the possibilities of goodness become realities of Grace.

That's the Promise of Easter mysteriously lived out for the women and us – while we so often live in a mix of fears, anxieties and to dos – God is always whispering the Promise of Resurrection that beckons us to try again, go forward and give it a chance, forgive them one more time and speak the behaviors of connection and love. Try it out once more....live the life that Love requires along with its privilege of togetherness. This is what it means to be faithful – To Build a New Normal like what we pray for that God's will and presence be done here as well as it is in heaven. Easter is the Promise for that New Normal from so long ago that echoes into the mysteries of today, the decisions of tomorrow and the eternal lives of us all.