

There You Will See Him

Mark 16:1-8

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I like to think of Easter as a verb rather than a noun. The English teacher within me knows it is a noun, but the faith-driven person within me is alive to Easter's vibrancy, Easter's resurrection energy. When Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome arrived at the tomb at sunrise on Easter morning, they found the tomb empty. The Risen Christ was not there. Christ had risen, but wasn't hanging around, wasn't sipping a second cup of coffee as I am prone to do on many mornings. The Risen Christ was up and away, on route to Galilee, already setting the stage for launching the blessed community that would become known as the church. No dust collecting under his feet!

“There you will see him.” These five words are a promise like none other. I've tried this week to put myself in the sandals of those first disciples. Ringing in my ear are those five words, “There you will see him.” That promise must have burned in their hearts as they hustled to Galilee. It's hard to imagine those first disciples walking to Galilee. I'm sure they ran or jogged or sprinted or quick-stepped their way to that place of rendezvous.

For Christian churches throughout the ages, ‘Galilee’ has taken on the power of a religious symbol, a spiritual metaphor. Galilee becomes any place we encounter the Risen Christ. The Apostle Paul encountered the Christ while he was on his way to Damascus with warrants for the arrest of anyone claiming to be a believer. The Risen Christ knocked Paul off his horse and basically said, “Let's have a little talk. I need your life to head in a new direction.” That place along the path was Paul's Galilee.

I know dozens of men and women who had their first Christ encounter at an AA meeting. At that moment of utter despair, the Christ showed up at their 'Galilee' and that was the first step toward sobriety. I could tell you about a guy in Wisconsin named Bob who said he was as good as dead until he found his way to an AA meeting where he found acceptance and understanding and tough love. He said for him it was an Easter Day!

“There you will see him.” These five words are first of all a promise, a divine promise, a promise of hope, a promise of connection, a promise that life can, indeed, begin again. Easter's dawn is not intended to be limited to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome; it is intended as an invitation for anyone, any time, who needs a Christ encounter, a breath of fresh air, a new start, a reason to go on living.

My brother Billy went off to college at the University of Kentucky. He took with him all the usual stuff a freshman hauls to college, plus an addiction to drugs. He took that with him also. One day, there was a knock on his dorm room door. It was students from a campus Christian organization. They invited him to Galilee. He accepted the invitation. That was in the 1970's. Billy just finished an astounding career as a professor of religion at Temple University. He looks back over his life journey and he sees his Christ encounter came on the darkest day. For him, the knock on the dorm room door was an Easter sunrise.

“There you will see him.” The good news of the Gospel is wrapped up in this five-word promise. There...in your darkest hour, at your 'Galilee', you will see him; you will encounter him; you will discover the truth that Christ's resurrection power is for real!

“There you will see him.” I am guessing those first disciples were bug-eyed as they jogged the last few miles into Galilee.

Their eyes were wide open, straining to see the Risen Christ waiting for them. Where, exactly, in Galilee, would he be?

Over the two millennia of Christian life, we have realized that we “see” the Risen Christ with more of our senses than with our eyes.

For me, it’s the salty tears that tell me I am in the presence of the Christ. When I follow my tears backward, they always take me to my soul, to that great repository of love. All the loves of my life are there. Grampa Clemmer is there. Nana Allen is there. Debbie Rattelle is there. When any of the loves are triggered, and they leak out, I know it is an Easter Day. Last Sunday, at 10:00 a.m., at the Second Sunday Music program, I sat and listened to Jenny Bush play the organ. I closed my eyes and I pictured her as a church school girl, then as a confirmand, then as a mission partner, then as a college student studying organ at Connecticut College, then playing here on our Schlicker Organ. I tell you the joy I experienced was an Easter joy. The tears that leaked out from behind my eyeballs told me that though the calendar said it was Palm Sunday...it was truly an Easter morning. The Risen Christ was there rejoicing with us! It’s not that Rev Allen is an old softy who cries a lot. It’s that the Risen Christ is ever-present, ever encountering us, ever raising us up.

Sometimes we “see” the Risen Christ with our ears, sometimes with our noses, sometimes with our fingertips, sometimes with our minds, sometimes with our hearts. **“There you will see me.”** This is an astounding promise. It makes us want to open all our senses, all our pores, all our receptors to the presence of the One who is risen, the One who meets us in our Galilees, in our tears, in our loves.

I actually believe that if we listen hard enough, if we listen with all our might; we’ll be able to hear as the three women heard: **“There you will see me.”** In the greatest of hope, Amen!

