

The Reverend Renee L. Fenner
St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
Easter Sunday
April 1, 2018
Text: Mark 16:1-8

“He is going ahead of you”

I remember as a child how my mother always seemed to run ahead of us kids. Of course, she was not running *from* us, at least I don't think so, but she had a quick stride about her even when she wore heels. There were times that we could barely keep up with her unless she held us by the hand, and then we were the ones doing the running! It didn't matter whether we were walking to or from the car at Northwest Plaza or River Roads, or up the walkway going into church for Mass. “C'mon here! Y'all keep up!” she'd say. I remember the time when it was just she and I out shopping for the perfect Easter dress for me. I had been looking in the racks and pulled out a dress to show her only to find that she had already walked away. I panicked of course, tears about to spill, when she came from nowhere. “What's wrong?” “I thought you left me!” I sputtered back. She just rolled her eyes and had that, “Renee, I told you to keep up!” look on her face. Trips to the grocery store were sometimes no better as she walked ahead of us and constantly called back to us, “C'mon here! Y'all keep up!” So it wasn't long until we found ourselves staying at home or in the car with my dad while she shopped-*alone*.

“C'mon here! Y'all keep up!” was pretty much the message the risen Lord left with the angel that first Easter morning.

In Mark's gospel it was at first light that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome made their way to the tomb. It was an uneasy journey, as uneasy as the last couple of days. The other disciples had fled from the Garden the night Jesus was arrested. But *they* were there when Jesus was crucified. They heard him cry out. They saw him take his last breath. They saw how his body had been hastily wrapped in linens and placed in the tomb.

Many a tear had been shed amongst them remembering how he taught them and made them laugh. How he included them among his closest friends and changed their lives forever and countless others too. They remembered how he talked about how life in God's kingdom would be so much different than the life they were living now. He didn't deserve the fate handed him.

The women were fearful and terrified too. Who wouldn't be? Still, they kept walking toward the tomb, not knowing if they would be followed or stopped from tending to his body. They did not know how they would be able roll the stone away.

But when they arrived, the women discovered the stone had already been moved. The tomb was empty and the body of Jesus gone! They turned to find a young man dressed in white looking back at them. And he tells them, "Do not be alarmed...He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is where they laid him. Go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just he told you..." In other words, "C'mon here! Y'all keep up!" An empty tomb is not where you will find Jesus! If you're looking for him, he is not here! He has left this dark and dreary place. Go and tell the disciples and Peter, too, that they all need to get a move on and keep up, because he has gone back to Galilee!

But what an odd ending to Mark's version of Easter morning as he tells us that "they (the women) went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." It is odd because fear really did not have the last word!

I don't know what you or I would have done if we had been with those women. But I would imagine that after shaking off the fear and trembling felt in those early hours, we would have found courage and gone running alongside them to tell Peter and the others the message of the angel, "...He is not here...He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him..." Yes, back to Galilee. Back to the place where Jesus first began proclaiming the good news of God and the nearness of God's kingdom. Back to Galilee where he taught in the streets and the synagogues, cast out demons, healed the sick and found some of his closest followers. Back to where it all began. Even the most trying parts. But this time, this time, everything would be different. The risen Lord would meet them there to send them and us *forward* to tell the story.

And two thousand years later, we *continue* to tell the story of how corruption, hate, and fear sent Jesus to his grave. But more importantly how God's true light refused to be darkened. For love burst forth from the tomb that Easter morning and the power of sin and death was broken forever.

Yes, we are sent out to give witness to the hopes and promises of Easter, to proclaim the promises of resurrection and new life knowing that the risen Lord

goes before us. He goes before us as we proclaim that he lives. He goes before us as we feed the poor and clothe the naked. He goes before us as we strive to bring peace, justice, and equality to a broken world. And because he lives our lives will never be the same. Thank be to God!

He calls out, “C’mon here! Y’all keep up!” With faith, I hope we will!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!