

## **Gospel: Mark 16:1-8**

*The resurrection of Jesus is announced, and the response is one of terror and amazement.*

<sup>1</sup>When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint [Jesus' body]. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" <sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup>So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Hello? Hello? Hello? Is there anybody in there? Just nod if you can hear me. Is there anyone at home? Come on now. I hear you're feeling down. Well I can ease your pain. Get you on your feet again. Relax. I'll need some information first. Just the basic facts. Can you show me where it hurts?

As you heard these words, no, it's not a group of phrases, listing things that maybe somebody would have said standing on the outside of the large stone that have been rolled in front of the cave where Jesus was buried. They were not words of encouragement from his followers for him to be resurrected and come alive either. The rock 'n' roll astute among us, have probably quickly recognize that these are the lyrics, the opening words, from a legendary Pink Floyd song called Comfortably Numb. Again, those words: "Hello? Hello? Hello? Is there anybody in there? Just nod if you can hear me. Is there anyone at home? Come on now. I hear you're feeling down. Well I can ease your pain. Get you on your feet again. Relax. I'll need some information first. Just the basic facts. Can you show me where it hurts? Later in the song the refrain comes in which the Gilmour sings these words: "I have become comfortably numb."

Comfortably numb. As we come to the empty tomb this morning, as we hear again the good news of the resurrection, as we once again discover that the body is not there but in fact Jesus is alive, I wonder if in 2018, we have become comfortably numb. Are we numb to what is going on in the world? A world that is dominated by a numbness that comes from pain, a numbness that comes from drug use and addiction, a numbness that comes from abuse, a numbness that comes from gun shootings, a numbness that comes from politics, a numbness that comes from natural disasters. Now, I do not use the phrase "comfortably numb" to mean that

these things we hear about in the news, comfort us in anyway, but perhaps our comfort comes because it might not be us. Perhaps, some of us, have managed to escape some of the major events/happenstances that have occurred around us. But I am also guessing, that many of us would not have to go too far, to bump up against these issues. And I also know for many in this room, that we do not have to go very far at all, because it directly involves our lives. So, we may not be comfortable, but perhaps sometimes we feel numb.

I think numbness would have certainly been a word that the disciples and the women followers of Jesus themselves, probably would have used to describe the events that took place, not only on the dawn of that Easter morning; but the events of the days leading up to those moments. They would've been numb from having a final meal with Jesus in which announced that he would not be with them any longer. They would have been numb from going into the Garden of Gethsemane watching him pray while they struggled to keep their eyes open to suddenly watching him be hauled off after being arrested; and then scared for their own lives and fleeing of foot as fast as they possibly could go. They would have been numb as they hid out in the upper room, hoping that the locked door would not come alive with the sound of knocking, with more temple guards out to arrest them as well. They would have been numb from hearing the reports that Jesus had been placed before the Jewish authorities, before the Roman authority, and that he had been whipped, he had been scourged, he had been humiliated, he had been spit upon, and now to top it off he was sentenced to die a painful death. Judas was numb because his plan to hand Jesus over had backfired. Peter was numb because he failed miserably in his promise to Jesus that he would never deny him. All the

followers would have been numb to hear, or be brave enough to witness in person, by drawing close to Golgotha, to the cross, only to witness their great master dying as he hung there. Numb to watch him writhe in pain and refuse no drink. Numb to hear him call out that God had forsaken him. They were probably too numb to hang around and watch his body being taken down from the cross and placed into a hole ground. They were numb as they hid away, frightened and scared, numb to what their future might entail. And then this word came from women. He was not dead - he was alive! Now everything had been turned upside down; now everything was new; now all boundaries had been broken; now Jesus defeated even death – and everything changed. Jesus was alive again. The tomb was empty.

But going back to the original question, I wonder on this side of the cross, these many centuries later, that this message, that perhaps we have heard Easter Sunday after Easter Sunday, Easter season after Easter season, worship service after worship service, that have we, in fact, become comfortably numb?

Maybe as a world citizen, maybe as a country, maybe as a society, maybe as a church, maybe as an individual Christian, we have become comfortably numb to the poor, numb to the downtrodden, comfortably numb to refugees, numb to people of color, numb to people pushed to the margins, numb to people who are different from us, numb to people who we would like to just easily write off and classify as nothing, comfortably numb to those with whom we disagree?

Is our faith life comfortably numb? Is the way we view the world, the way we view our leaders, the way we view our politics, the way we have an outlook on life comfortably numb? Because I think if we have become

comfortably numb at the church and its future, along with his present, everything is impacted.

The lyrics of that song continue... "There is no pain you are receding; A distant ship smoke on the horizon; You are only coming through in waves Your lips move, but I can't hear what you're saying; When I was a child I had a fever; My hands felt just like two balloons; Now I've got that feeling once again; I can't explain - you would not understand; This is not how I am; I have become comfortably numb." According to a Rolling Stone interview, the lyrics came from Roger Waters' experience when he was injected with tranquilizers by a doctor for stomach cramps so that he could get through a show on the band's tour. He was exhausted and said: "That was the longest two hours of my life, trying to do a show when you can hardly lift your arm." The experience gave him the idea which eventually became the lyrics to this song.

Maybe many of us are exhausted; maybe many of us are tired of life circumstance, maybe some of us are trying to get through the show, maybe many of us are numb. Maybe this Easter morning in 2018 it's not Jesus laying in the tomb, maybe it is us, maybe we have become too comfortably numb. Maybe we need a symbolic slap in the face; maybe we need a good kick in the pants, maybe we need a lightning bolt of the Holy Spirit; maybe we need a comforting hand, hug, or prayer; maybe we need to receive the bread and wine, maybe we need to be renewed in our faith.

Maybe we need to arise, maybe we need to wake up, maybe we need to be resurrected both in the church and as individuals Christians. Maybe today it is us laying in the tomb and Jesus is outside calling to us. We don't have to worry about Jesus coming alive again; we do not have to worry about Jesus being resurrected, because that is why we are here,

because it did happen, Jesus is risen. He is risen - that is present tense, it is not just a past event, Jesus is alive and perhaps this day on April 1st, we as a church, we as faithful people, we who are on a life journey, pray to overcome our numbness of life, overcome our numbness of faith, overcome those things in front of us, overcome the obstacles thrown our way, and hear the words of Christ that because he lives we shall live also. Jesus is alive. Everything is different. Everything is new. Death is defeated – come rise to new life. Amen.

Christ is Risen – Christ is risen indeed.