

Easter Sunday 2021

Mark knows how to tell a story. From the moment that Jesus bursts on the scene, he commands our attention with his actions and his words. He preaches and heals and he teaches his disciples. He suffers and dies.

But now, when we most long to see him, he is not here. We don't see him. We see only the empty place he left behind. Then some stranger tells us that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that he is going ahead of us into Galilee, and we are afraid. Who wouldn't be?

Mark knows how to tell our story. We're afraid of being left alone in a world without hope. But we are also afraid to believe the good news. We're afraid of what believing might cost us. Esau McCaulley wrote a powerful essay in The New York Times called The Unsettling Power of Easter. I'm going to quote some of what he said.

Mark's ending points to a truth that often gets lost in the celebration. Easter is a frightening prospect. For the women, the only thing more terrifying than a world with Jesus dead was one in which he was alive.

We know what to do with grief and despair. We have a place for it. We have rituals that surround it...Hope is much harder to come by. The women did not go to the tomb looking for hope. They were searching for a place to grieve. They wanted to be left alone in despair. The terrifying prospect of Easter is that God called these women to return to the same world that crucified Jesus with a very dangerous gift: hope in the power of God, the unending reservoir of forgiveness and an abundance of love. It would make them seem like fools. Who could believe such a thing?

And McCaulley continues. Christians, at their best, are the fools who dare believe in God's power to call dead things to life.

My friends, I invite you today to be fools. Fools who dare to believe in God's power to call dead things to life. Fools who trust the young man's promise that Jesus is going ahead of you. Fools who believe that if you keep following Jesus, you will see him.

Fools who believe that God's love is stronger than death. Fools who believe that God is making all things new. Fools who believe in the power of the resurrection.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.