

Messy an' Ich Hope
MARK 16:1-8 April 4, 2010 Easter

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.

And that's the end of the story.

That's how the original Gospel of Mark ended.

The earliest versions of the gospel we have don't have the extended ending.

But apparently God had more to say to someone and that person added more to the end of the gospel.

Either they just didn't like the way it ended, or they had heard some other stories that Mark apparently hadn't heard;

stories that indicated the story didn't end with the women just running away in fear.

According to this added ending to Mark, Mary Magdalene did finally go and tell the others what they had seen.

So here's that added ending [Mark 16:9-14]

Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, **they would not believe it.** After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, **but they did not believe them.**

Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he scolded them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

What I'm interested in is that period of time between when Mary ran away in fear, and the time when she finally came and told the others.

This is the messy an' ich time.

A few weeks ago when we were looking at Jesus as a prophet, I pointed out that what a prophet does is to call us to a closer relationship with God;
which always means leaving behind the safe and comfortable and entering a wilderness of uncertainty and ambiguity where new realities are born and we see new visions of the Realm of God.

That is what happened to Mary at the tomb when Jesus had disappeared and those two guys spoke to her
– she was thrown into a wilderness of uncertainty and ambiguity where a new reality was born and she saw a new vision of God's realm.

That time of uncertainty is what I would characterize as the Messy and Ich time.

It is that time when everything is all messy and ich, it's usually a time of grief, because what was once meaningful and made sense no longer holds together.

It's like when a loved one dies, or when a child finally figures out life isn't fair.

It's like when you realize that your childhood ideas about God just don't cut it anymore.

It's like when your first real love falls apart and your left feeling like this is a loveless world.

This **Messi & ich** revelation of these two scary guys throws Mary into a **Messi & ich** time. For Mary it was a very scary time.

While the **Messy** and **ich** time is a stinky time to live through, like manure it is what fertilizes change and growth.

When Jesus was with them everything seemed so certain.

He was the **messiah** who was going to come and solve all their problems.

And then -- WHAT? He died.
What's that all about?

Well, that ended that dream for Mary.
So much for that hope that the **messiah** would come and solve all their problems for them.

But she'd get over it.
She'd had other loved ones die.
After all, in these days, if the Romans didn't kill
ya, something else usually did -- well before your
45th birthday.
He wasn't the first loved one to die.
Of course he was her first potential messiah to
up and be executed.
But, she'd get over it.

But now she goes to his tomb and he's gone, and
in his place are a couple of spooky dudes who
say he's not there and he'll meet them in Galilee.

Now this is messy and ich.
This blows your mind.
This wipes out your whole sense of reality. This
just takes the framework of what is real and
smashes it into little pieces.

Try to imagine how you would feel if you had gone to the grave of someone you really loved who had just died and when you get there you see that the grave is unearthed and empty and a couple guys appear behind you and tell you, “Oh, yeah – he’s moved on. Said he’d meet you in a day or so over at the library.”

Yeah, that’s gotta be the kind a thing that just really messes up your whole day, not to mention just freakin’ the bejeebers out of you.

I think being seized by terror and running away in fear is a pretty rational thing to do.

Without a doubt you would find yourself totally disoriented.

But you know what, it is this time of disorientation and chaos, this **messy an’ ic** time, that really is the foundation for new birth, new understandings, new hope; it is the foundation for a resurrection.

So for those of you who are awake and astute this morning you have already figured out that Messy & Ich is like one of the license plates that says something other than what it says.

In this instance, Messy & Ich is -- Messianic; and where I'm headed is that it is in this Messy & Ich time that we really have a messi-an-ic hope.

Messi-an-ic hope comes in all shapes and forms, but it always comes in times of upheaval and it brings a real hope that God's love can change the world.

There's no hope for change in a comfortable well ordered world.

Hope isn't born out of certainty and comfort.

Hope is child of doubt and uncertainty and disorientation.

After all, if you're certain that the earth is flat whose gonna keep sailing till they fall off the edge?

If you're certain that Newton has all the right answers about the laws of nature what fool would question the nature of gravity and toy with relativity or build a collider to reenact the Big Bang.

Why do archeological research if you're already certain that God created everything exactly the way it is some 6000 odd years ago?

If you already have all the right knowledge about God, then why look any farther?

In such times of certainty and comfort, the messiah has no hope of bringing change and a new vision of God's realm.

Yeah, Mary's reality was all pretty much set in place.

People die and the dream dies with them – that's reality.

And then that certainty about how reality works all got shattered into little pieces.

When reality falls apart on you, that is the very scariest time of life.

But then something happened.

In Mark's gospel we really aren't privy to the details;

it's just this short little line that almost seems to hide in the scripture.

Between the time Mary ran away in fear and trembling and the time she gets her courage back, something major happened.

He appeared.

Whoever it was that wanted to finish Mark's gospel with a more hopeful ending tells us right away that Jesus appeared to Mary.

Following Mary's sense of reality being shattered at the site of the empty tomb and in the midst of her messy an' ic time, in the darkness of her despairing disorientation;

a new reality was born;

a new reality appeared before her and in this new reality death was not the end.

Jesus had not been consumed by the grave, and all the hope for a world governed by love and compassion was once again on track; in fact it could no longer be derailed.

Those times when all reality seems to come apart at the seams, those are the scariest of times, but they are also the most exciting and creative of times.

For unless a seed is put in the ground and dies, that is it ceases to be a seed, only then can a new plant emerge.

Ok, bear with me on this one, it's one of those "Aha," moments of enlightenment, but it may also be one of those times where you had to be there.

I have this spot in the back of my mouth where this tooth is missing.

What brought an end to that tooth was a kernel of popcorn that I accidentally bit down on and it broke my tooth. After root canals and crowns, it was still a lost cause and had to be pulled.

Popcorn kernels are really hard.

It's like you can hit them with a hammer and nothing happens.

But turn up the heat, causing the atoms in the kernel to start get all excited and disorderly and POP.

That rock hard kernel becomes this wonderfully soft, pillowy, morsel.

It's the same with our lives, and it is the story of the resurrection.

If the heat isn't applied, if things don't get uncomfortable, if everything stays ordered and safe; then there is no messy an' ic hope.

Without death – there is no resurrection.

AMEN.