

"THE VOICE OF TRIUMPH"

Mark 16:1-7

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--MESSAGE, PART I--

1. Read CEB Text earlier in service: Mark 16:1-7  
(followed by Dramatic Monologue of Roman Centurion)
  
2. Chippie was a parakeet who loved to sing. One day he was singing in his cage when his owner decided to clean up the area. So, she took a vacuum cleaner hose and carefully started to vacuum all around Chippie's cage, including the cage bottom as Chippie sang.  
 Just then, the owner's phone rang, and as she reached to grab it out of her pocket, her vacuum hose accidentally tilted upwards. She heard a "swoosh" and felt a tug at the end of her vacuum hose as a lump made its way through the hose to the vacuum itself.  
 Frantically, she hung up the phone, opened the vacuum, and sorted through all the debris. There, among the dust was Chippie, still alive, but quite stunned and not sure of exactly what had happened. So, the owner dusted him off, ran to the sink, turned on the faucet and washed him off, then ran to the bathroom and turned on a hairdryer to dry Chippie's feathers.  
 A couple of days later, the friend who'd called on the phone and heard the story asked how Chippie was doing. And the owner replied, *"Well, he's still alive, but he doesn't sing anymore. He just sits around looking stunned."*  
  
 A--You know, there are things which happen to us in life that sometimes seem to just suck the "song" out of us -- things like the loss of a loved one, a diagnosis of cancer, finding out we've been laid off from our job, a tragic incident of violence or death in our community, or even the simply incivility of today's world.  
  
 B--And when things like this happen, our natural human response is often shock and disbelief -- we sit around feeling stunned by what's happened to us.
  
3. Well, this was certainly the case both for the three women and the Disciples described in today's Bible story from Mark 16.  
  
 A--They'd followed Jesus for several years, believing that he was the promised Messiah -- the one who'd free them from their Roman oppressors.  
  
 B--But in the whirlwind of events that happened since that past Thursday, all of that had changed: Jesus had been arrested, condemned to death in a mock trial, brutally beaten and scourged by Roman soldiers, and finally put to death on the most gruesome execution instrument of that day and time (a wooden cross).

C--For the last two days, the male Disciples had huddled in an upstairs room of a Jerusalem home, stunned and fearful that THEY would be next.

4. And since Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath (when no work is allowed) the three women disciples in this text (Mary Magdalene, Mary Jesus' mother, and Salome) had to wait until early Sunday morning to come to the tomb so they could embalm Jesus' body.

A--All that while, they'd worried about how they were going to move the heavy stone away from the tomb entrance. <sup>1</sup>

B--Of course, when they arrived, to their amazement, the stone had already been moved out of the way.

C--And so, cautiously and timidly, they entered the dark, open tomb, fearing their might be a robber or thief still lurking about.

5. So, I can only imagine their utter surprise when they instead see what Verse 5 of the scripture calls a "*young man, clothed in white, sitting on the right side....*"

A--Now, tradition holds that this was angel sent by God. We're not told WHY he was there <sup>2</sup> -- just what he DID: sensing the women's fear, Verses 6-7 tell us that he said, "*Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you.*"

B--In other words, in the voice of this angel, these women hear something that they themselves had given up on -- HOPE that Jesus' story would end in TRIUMPH.

6. Well, as we continue in worship, I want us to invite us all to listen for the signs of Easter hope and triumph as we remember the love and majesty of God. And a little later, we'll continue this message as we talk about two things that this does for us...

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CONTINUE IN WORSHIP

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--MESSAGE, PART II--

7. You know, earlier I talked about the hope that the angel gave to the three women at the empty tomb that Jesus' story would end in triumph.

A--For the last five weeks, here at Cornerstone, we've been sharing in a worship series called "*Voices of Lent*," using some of the themes of the Christian season on Lent to teach us about life and faith. Well, while today's two-part message is not really *part* of that series, it's focus is certainly *inspired* by it,...

B--...Because in this conversation between these three women and this angel, the women encounter what I'm calling "***The Voice of Triumph***" -- a message from the angel that enabled **at least two things to happen**:

8. First, this "Voice of Triumph" enabled the women (and later the rest of the disciples, as well) **TO OVERCOME THEIR OWN FEARS.**

A--Remember that in Verse 6, this angel said, "*Don't be alarmed...*"

B--Well, you & I today live a world filled with all kinds of things that cause fear & alarm:

1--Disease; death; injustice and inequity; domestic violence; terrorism (both foreign and home-grown); political division; economic uncertainty; and others

2--And on a personal level, we often face things like fear of failure; fear of success; fear of change in our family, community or even in our church; fear of being rejected or not appreciated by those around us; and so on.

C--Yet, if we truly understand the message of Easter, then fear does not have to have *final* authority over us -- instead, it has the power to *drive away* all the fear, doubt, prejudice, and uncertainty in our hearts and minds today. <sup>3</sup>

D--Growing up at College Park 1<sup>st</sup> UMC (near the Atlanta airport), I remember that every Sunday night our evening service would end with the congregation singing the chorus of a famous Bill Gaither song that went like this:

*"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow  
Because He lives, all fear is gone  
Because I know he holds the future,  
And life is worth the living just because He lives"* <sup>4</sup>

E--The Easter "*Voice of Triumph*," you see, enables us to overcome the fears of life that so often paralyze and bind us.

9. But another thing that this angel's "voice" did for these women & the other Disciples that first Easter was to help them **TO FIND (and SHARE) A VOICE OF THEIR OWN.**

A--Remember Chippie the Parakeet that I talked about earlier?

1--Well, I want to suggest that when the horrible events of Good Friday had sucked all of the "song" out of these women, causing them feel "stunned," ...

2--...the "Voice of Triumph" shared by this angel of God enabled them to find (and sing) a new "song" of life and hope in their hearts once again.

3--And that's what Easter does for us, as well! Whatever takes the "song" (or steals the joy) out of OUR lives, Easter helps us to be able to find (& sing) a new "song" again.

B--And not only that, but Verse 7 says what we're to *do* with that song: "*Go [and] tell...*" <sup>5</sup>

1--William Sangster was a Methodist pastor who spearheaded a great revival in Britain after World War II.

2--But his work was cut short by a disease that eventually paralyzed his entire body, including his vocal chords.

3--And on the Easter just before he died, he painfully wrote a short note to his daughter that said, "*How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' [But] Far worse [is] to have a voice & not want to shout*" <sup>6</sup>

C--The good news of Jesus' resurrection, you see, is not meant to be kept to *ourselves*, shared only at church services.

1--No. We're all called to "go and tell" the world there is hope and life in Christ!

2--...To announce -- in person, on social media, on Zoom, and anywhere else that we interact with others -- that death and fear and doubt have been defeated once and for all, and that any of us can join in that hope *IF we will simply claim it*.

10. In short, just as the angel did for the three women, you and I are called to help others experience the reality of Easter, too -- literally to BE the "*Voice of Triumph*" for others.

A--It's a "voice" that our WORLD desperately needs to hear today.

B--And it's a "voice" that EACH OF US needs to hear, as well.

C--So, both by what you *say* and by what you *do*, are you willing to "speak" it?

11. [PRAYER]

12. [CONTINUE with PRAISE & WORSHIP SONGS, followed by UMH#310, "He Lives" as closing song...]

### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> What impresses me is NOT that they were worrying, but that they bothered to come at all, knowing that they wouldn't be able to move the stone themselves!

<sup>2</sup> Was he sent to help Jesus get out of his burial cloth? Perhaps to help him get up? Was he there to roll away the stone so Jesus could get out? Was he sent to get rid of the Roman sentry that scripture tells us guarded Jesus' tomb (and which today's text makes no mention of)? Or was he just sent to twiddle his thumbs, waiting for the three women to arrive?

<sup>3</sup> *"Easter is a feast and is celebrated as the feast of freedom. For Easter is the beginning of the laughter of the redeemed and the dance of the liberated.... Since earliest times Easter hymns have celebrated the victory of life by laughing at death, by mocking at hell, and by making the lords of this world absurd. Easter is God's protest against death. Easter is the feast of freedom from death"* [Jürgen Moltmann, "Experiences of God," cited in Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 4].

<sup>4</sup> Bill Gaither, chorus of "*Because He Lives*", found in The United Methodist Hymnal #364.

<sup>5</sup> It actually says, "*Go, tell the disciples and Peter...*" (emphasis mine). Why was Peter singled out? Well, because this angel knew the great guilt that Peter must have been feeling over his triple denial of Jesus the Thursday before, and knew that he needed special attention to help him overcome it.

What is also amazing about this text is that it plainly tells us that the very first people to "preach" the good news of Jesus' resurrection were NOT men, but women (making this one of the strongest biblical endorsements in support of women as clergy)!

<sup>6</sup> James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 167.