

WGUMC Easter Sunday April 5, 2015 Mark 16:1-8
"Great Day for Up"

Mark's Gospel ends rather abruptly at the empty tomb. The women are told about the resurrection but they don't get to see it, which puts the two Mary's and Salome right where we are today. And where we were this whole past week, waiting for our friend Claudia Pierson to die. Like the women, we've seen enough death in this congregation in the past several months, don't we all need to see some resurrection?

Thank God for the children who are here today. They are the witnesses to the resurrection that we grownups can't see. They hold the promise of rebirth that our old souls sorely need. Believe this: no matter how old we are, there is something in each one of us that is still struggling to be born. Easters and baptisms remind us of the people we can still become.

Traditionally, baptisms have been done on Easter because immersion in water symbolizes our dying and rising with Christ. But there's a more everyday reason, too. When we remember

our baptism on Easter, we remember that rebirth is an option for us, that the resurrection can be real for us, and that it is possible to see it not off in some far distant future in some strange world, but right here right now.

Our Maundy Thursday service was wonderful and not just because we had the choir to sing and a brand new labyrinth to walk, thanks to all the memorial money we've taken in recently. It was wonderful because that night we witnessed a miracle.

Joyce Osborn fell in her home back in February and was unable to call for help. Who knows how long after, a few of her friends from this church knocked on her front door, then went around to a back window and figured out that she was trapped in the bathroom, so they called 911. Tests at the hospital revealed that she had had multiple strokes, and indeed she was showing signs of brain trauma. Anyone who visited her in the days and weeks afterwards saw that. Thank God she didn't die, but things were different. Like the women at the tomb who

were terrified that Jesus was gone and never coming back, we were all scared that the Joyce we knew and loved might never be back.

Well, getting the jump on Jesus, Joyce came back on Maundy Thursday. Her cousin Judy brought her to our worship service. The previous day, Joyce and I had talked about her recovery and the amazing transformation that she has been through in this season of Lent, a transformation that has been physical and emotional and spiritual. I hope that one of these days she will tell us in her own words what resurrection feels like.

As you may know, Joyce has been at this faith business for a very long time. She was confirmed in this church back in the early 1940's when it was still on Lincoln Avenue. So you see, you're never too old to experience rebirth. That's something I want everyone, especially our new members to know. It's never too late to start living life. You are never too

busy to embrace the blessing or to become one. And to those who have been hurt, I want to say: you can never be so burned by people or circumstances or even churches that God can't throw some baptismal water on those scars and give you baby skin again.

When everyone left the service on Thursday, I walked the labyrinth myself. I finally had the time, space and quiet to reconnect with something that I believe God plants in all of us: a very deep longing to be fully alive. And as I followed the path that twists and turns far too much like our own lives, I had to admit to myself how much I needed to remember my baptism and how much I wanted to reclaim that gift and rekindle that fire. I don't know what I will do with that desire, but it was good to feel it. I kept whispering to myself Paul's words in Philippians: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection" and while I know that means sharing in his

sufferings, it also means sharing in his joyous and glorious life. I want that life. And I want you to have it, too.

Let the children remind you that regardless of what is going on around you, it is a great time to be alive. It is, as Dr. Suess would say, a "great day for up." I know the world will get you down. Your job, your health, your finances will grind you down. Your friends will let you down. Your children will wear you down. But Easter comes just in time to lift you back up. Look around and see what the children and Dr. Suess can see:

*Everybody's doing Ups!
On bikes...and trees...and buttercups.*

*Up! Up! Up!
Great day for Up!
Wake every person,
pig and pup,
till EVERYONE
on Earth is up!*

[Dr. Seuss, *Great Day for Up*, Random House: 1974.]

Including you
so hear me say:
Get up
for Christ the Lord is risen today!