

Epworth Chapel on the Green
April 12, 2009
Easter Day
Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander

Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:14-18
Colossians 3:1-4
Mark 16:1-8

As the important women in Jesus' life approach the tomb early in the morning, they are startled by the angelic messenger who informs them that Jesus is not there.

The angel's message to them is a simple, yet important one, because it is in reality a message for us as well. The angel says to them: "Go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: *Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.*"

I've often read this and wondered, why Galilee? Why would Jesus meet them all in Galilee? Why not Jerusalem? Why not back to the Garden of Gethsamene? Why not back to the Mount of Olives? Why Galilee?

But when you think about it, Galilee makes perfect sense.

Galilee was the place where it all began, right? Galilee was the place where Jesus launched his ministry, the place where he found some men mending their nets and challenged them to follow him and become fishers of men. Galilee was the place 80 miles or so removed from the seat of political and religious power,

and it was the place to which some very frightened men would now be returning as quickly as their sandals would carry them. After what has just happened to Jesus, it is time to “get out of Dodge” (or in this case, Jerusalem), before the people who killed Jesus find these men guilty by association and attempt to do the same to them.

Galilee makes sense. For what do you do when life blows up in your face? What do you do when hope turns to bitter disappointment?

You return to what you know. You return to the way things used to be, before you gave yourself permission to think that your life could actually be different, that things could be better, that the future was worth looking toward.

You go back to *Galilee*. Back to that place in your life that is so much more than a place. Back to the drawing board. Back to reality, to the real world, where you say to yourself: *What was I thinking? How did I ever get it in my head that my life could be anything other than what its always been?*

I wonder if that’s how Peter, James, John, Andrew, and the others felt?

I suspect that they did, but I know for a fact that I have felt that way at times. Perhaps you have too.

And for them -- and us -- this day carries a powerful message. For every time we set out in our disappointment to return to the “Galilees” in our lives,

someone is on the road out ahead of us. His Name is Jesus. He waits for us (each of us) in our own place called Galilee.

He waits to meet us there to show us that we are not crazy, that we were not wrong to think that things could be different. He waits on us, and when we arrive he looks at us, not to scold us, but with love in his eyes. And he opens his arms, and with a gleam in his eye he winks at us and says: *I told you so!*

Now, as beautiful and powerful as this reality is, some of us find it hard to accept. We struggle to believe that this Good News has our name on it, because we have often failed miserably in our lives and really messed things up. We harbor fear in our hearts and think, “Jesus might be waiting to see the others, but he’s surely not looking forward to seeing me. Not after what I’ve done.”

I imagine that Peter must have been struggling with some of these emotions. Perhaps *you* have felt like this in moments of *your* life. I know I have. I have denied my Lord more times than Peter, and I have often felt like the Apostle Paul when he said, “if you’re trying to win the title of world’s biggest screw up, get in line, the line forms behind me!”

To all of those who have ever felt this way, or perhaps feel this way even today, listen again to the angel’s message: “Go tell his disciples, *including Peter*, that he is going ahead of them and waiting on them.”

Go tell everyone, including _____, that Jesus is waiting for _____.

No wonder they call it GOOD NEWS.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.