

Easter Vigil
7/4/2007

Mark the Evangelist

Luke 24:1-12

Christ is Risen!

On a regular basis some one has a go at the authenticity of Jesus' death and Resurrection. The most recent was a collection of burial vessels that were unearthed, bearing the name of Jesus and others associated with his life. The thought that what we celebrate here is an idle tale is not new, but the difficulty of saying what is meant by this event is something even the New Testament writers found hard to grapple with. The gospel narratives are full of difficulty. Their manner of setting forth belief in the Resurrection does little to satisfy modern questions about what happened and how. The actual event of Resurrection had no human witnesses. These narratives are not historical, scientific or medical accounts of Easter Day. The empty tomb is a source of bewilderment, and to cap it all, even the disciples treated the report of the women as an idle tale.

The empty Tomb is the central image of the gospel narratives rather than any particular apparition of Jesus. This points to an absence which signals another form of presence. The tomb is empty but God's creative liberty is at work. Through the Risen One God is obstinately engaged with the created world and brings about the encounter, which gives birth to faith.

Resurrection means the story of Jesus has had a new and surprising beginning, one that may touch us with new life even today. For God continues to love a scattered, defeated people. God gathers and renews them so that they may be a people who witness to the scope and resource of divine love.

We will never be free of questions about this story. But the church continues to listen to these narratives, and to celebrate them, not because they spell out the truth for us in the modern sense, but because through them we continue to attend to Jesus, who is our truth. For us he is the life giver whose story is not only not over, it has just begun, to draw all people into a future and a relationship with God. His agency continues, in Word, Sacrament and community, all of which are inseparable from God's dealings with us. These narratives are not here for historical curiosity; we are not called to seek the living among the dead. They aim to have us ask the question: who is Jesus for us today? It is in asking this question that we may find ourselves challenged - to do our business in a different way. And in asking who is Jesus for us today, by the grace of God, we may find new life in his name.