

“The Mystery for the Ages”  
Mark 16:1-8

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In our epistle passage on this Easter morning, Paul tells the church at Corinth that the message of "most importance" which he has passed on to those reading this letter is the following:

- that Christ died for our sins,
- that he was buried,
- and that he was raised on the third day  
and appeared to his disciples.

I believe that most Christians would agree that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of our faith. Paul goes on to say later in the letter that, if there is no resurrection—if Christ has not been raised—then our faith is in vain, our sin remains, and when we die, we perish.

Most of Paul's letters to the early church contained responses, and sometimes reprimands, to some argument or question that had arisen among the new believers—which is most likely the case here. We can certainly assume that there were questions about the authenticity of the resurrection—which is reasonable, I suppose. Life experience has told us that once people die, they do not normally return to life.

So, then, when we say the words "Christ is risen, indeed!" do we really believe it, or is it just one more archaic phrase that is a part of our ancient litany of Easter? We can't logically explain it—certainly not within the realm of science of what we understand to be the natural laws of this world. Yet, as Christians, we affirm that it is true—even though logic and good sense challenge it.

It is certainly a mystery. Perhaps it is the greatest mystery of all time! We can't explain it, yet it is foundational to our faith! Perplexing, yet true! Inexplicable, yet somehow wonderful! And, still a mystery; even after 2000 years!

Some of you may be asking, "*Well, what do Presbyterians believe?*" Here is an excerpt from our [Brief Statement of Faith](#) which addresses that question:

*Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world.*

*God raised Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.*

The women came to the tomb early in the morning—while it was still dark. And pretty much everything they experienced there there was a mystery to them.

They came to the tomb and found the stone had been removed. Upon entering the tomb, they saw a young man, and they were alarmed. The young man told them that Jesus had been raised, and they fled from the tomb in terror and amazement.

It was a strange and startling thing—it didn't make any sense to them.

And even today, with all our knowledge and over 2000 years of insight, we have come no further in being able to explain these strange happenings than the women who experienced them on that first Easter morning. The resurrection of Jesus remains a profound and intriguing mystery.

And it is upon that mystery that we hang our faith. We continue to believe that this event, which took place in 1st century Jerusalem, still holds significant meaning for us today.

Now, when I was younger, in my teens and then into my early twenties, there was a certain saying by which I lived—*“Believe only half of what you see, and nothing that you hear.”* I was a very skeptical person and was wholly immersed in the logic of science. Biology was my favorite subject in high school, and I began college in Pre-Med. However, as I got older, and more spiritual, I began to realize that there were just some mysteries that science couldn't explain away, and I began to accept more and more things on faith.

Perhaps many of us are more accepting of mystery than we would be inclined to admit and are willing to accept things which we cannot logically explain. Coincidences that are too statistically unlikely to be mere chance occurrences. Dramatic improvements in health that aren't explained by medicines or treatments. Moments of clarity or insight that have no apparent cause or explanation. Those experiences that I like to call "God Things."

I certainly can't explain away everything I have experienced—so I accept it as either a mystery or a miracle. Though, there are some who manage to dismiss such things and focus instead on those things more easily understood.

However, if we truly believe in a Sovereign God, why should we expect God to operate within the parameters of our own limited understanding? Why should we expect the creator of all things seen and unseen, who was and is and is to come—to fit within our limited knowledge, or even within the limits of our imagination?

Do we believe that God is still as active in the world today as God was active in those stories we read in the Bible, and in all the years in between then and today? Do we believe that God continues to make all things new? Do we believe that God continues to bring about the kingdom of heaven upon the earth, little by little, all around us?

Yes—even on this glorious Easter morning, it takes a leap of faith to believe that a man – even the Son of God – rose from the dead after three days in the tomb and walked and talked and greeted old friends and shared a meal with them. Are you willing to take that leap?

For Christians, this is no simple mystery! This is the transformative event of re-creation, new life, life conquering death, the magnificent moment of our salvation, the undeserved gift of God's grace!

If we can accept this mystery and trust our lives and our souls to the one who was crucified and rose for our salvation – we will run certain risks—we run the risk of making ourselves vulnerable; we run the risk of having our hardened hearts opened to love; and, we run the risk of having our lives changed.

We have come together this Easter morning to celebrate a mystery—to proclaim our belief in the promise of eternal life in the one who was raised from the grave! We proclaim his resurrection—an event unprovable, implausible, and unexplainable—as the foundation of our faith.

We are reborn—alive anew!

We are born of water and the Spirit.

We are children, adopted into the family of the living God.

We are raised up by the grace of our Savior, Christ Jesus.

And, we are called to walk in the light of a new day!

The tomb is empty! He is no longer there! He is risen!

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! AMEN