

“And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Everybody inevitably learns that there are some things you can't change. Things have been written into our DNA, for example. One is predisposed for this. Another is predisposed for that. It's disappointing, but what can be done? There are so many things like that. Things are the way they are.

There's a little bit of comfort that comes from acknowledging things as they are. Perhaps you've heard of the five stages of grief. The last stage is acceptance. That is the stage that everyone is looking for because of that little bit of comfort that comes with it. There's a bit of peace. Prior to acceptance there is all kinds of fighting: denial, anger, bargaining, depression. Those are all ways of saying, “No!” Acceptance is that motherly voice that says, “Hush now. There there. Nothing can be done. In time you'll come to accept it, then you'll be at peace.”

The reason why there is peace is because you finally acknowledge the superiority of the forces at work. They are much larger and stronger than you. If you can't beat these forces, then you might as well quit fighting. It's a relief to not have to fight anymore. Having settled down the choke chain can be taken off and a regular leash put on.

The apostle Paul in several places in his letters talks about the superior and overwhelming powers and forces that exist in life. One of his favorite terms for this are the orderly pillars of this world, sometimes translated as the “principles of this world.” Paul says that we were enslaved to these things. That's another way of saying that they are overwhelmingly superior to us. We have to accept things the way they are—we have no other choice—because there's no changing them. But Paul proclaims something thrilling: God, in Christ, has set us free. We don't have to resign ourselves to what is assumed to be inevitable.

Not resigning yourself to what is deemed to be inevitable is one way to look at Jesus's work. The blind person seems to be doomed to blindness—nothing can be done—and yet he sees. The deaf hears. The unrighteous persons—drug dealers, prostitutes, tax collectors, and such—need not be unrighteous forever. Even the dead person can have those seemingly unbreakable chains broken. Jesus preaches good news. Good news for those who are enslaved to overwhelming forces is the message: “You are free!”

Think about Easter. Death is that ultimate force before whose superiority we grieve. Fight as you may, the best option seems to be acceptance. But, as Isaiah prophesied and as Jesus fulfilled, “Death is swallowed up forever.” The angel said, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He's not here. He has risen.” Jesus was no longer enslaved to death. He became its master. If Jesus can break this seemingly unbreakable chain, what others might be broken? The answer is all of them!

This is made clear with the festival we will celebrate 40 days from now, which is closely related to Easter. 40 days from now we will celebrate Jesus's ascension into heaven. He was raised up to the right hand of God the Father. This is the position of superiority over absolutely everything except God the Father.

Try to think of something that you deem to be absolute and unchangeable. How about the laws of thermo-dynamics? The physicists say that they are unbreakable. Jesus can break them. How about the space / time continuum discovered by Einstein? Jesus is Lord over it.

But these concerns can seem rather remote. How about that seemingly unchangeable law about money—namely, that those who've got it are going to keep it and those who don't aren't going to get it? Jesus is Lord. He has spoken about this. He turns things on their head. He says, "**Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation,**" and, on the other hand: "**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God.**" Money, finance, economics and so on are certainly things that people regard as inevitable and unchangeable. Jesus is Lord.

Or what if you are one of those charmed individuals who's got the world by the tail? You're so charming and dashing. Everyone loves you. In the game of life, you're a winner. Or, on the other hand, you're not one of those people. You've never been popular. You're sad and lonely. The general rule for how things go in this life is that those who are sparkling and charming remain sparkling and charming. Those who are duds remain duds.

Jesus, again, has spoken to this. He says, "**Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.**" And, on the other hand: "**Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.**" Jesus is Lord. You are not lord with all your talents and charm. Neither are sadness and loneliness lord. Jesus is Lord.

You can perhaps see how Easter has an edge to it. You can see how Easter has an edge to it in our Gospel reading this morning. Did you notice the women's reaction? When the angel told them that Jesus had risen you might have expected them to react with a "Hurray!" What does it say? "**And they went out and fled from the tomb.**" They couldn't get away fast enough. And it says, "**Trembling and astonishment had seized them.**" They shook. That word "astonishment" literally means, "they were out of their minds." Their world was reeling; their heads were swimming. Finally it says, "**They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**"

We are all well catechized in how we are supposed to react to Easter. We are supposed to be joyful and happy. So were these women doing wrong? I don't think so. I think they were seeing something that we often don't see. They were seeing that everything is changed. The old masters are no longer supreme. Jesus is supreme. That is to say, Jesus is the Christ! Jesus is the king! They had, of course, believed this about Jesus before, but they thought that he would only be an earthly king—a king of Israel. As it turns out he is king over absolutely everything. Easter changes everything.

Easter changes everything towards the good. Jesus as king is going to bring in everything that is good and life-giving and he is going to expel everything that is evil and life destroying. What is good will remain. What is evil will not. The days are numbered for everything and everyone that is evil. Sin, death, the devil, evil people, evil institutions—all of these are going under the boot of this King.

If you'd like to get an idea of what this resurrected, ascended, supreme King is like read Psalm 2. The apostles liked to quote Psalm 2, because it is so obviously about Jesus. What this Psalm says, in general, is that the kings, the high and mighty, those who regard themselves as the greatest, are going to have

another thought coming. The Psalm says, “**He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury.**” Needless to say, you don’t want to be on the wrong side of this King!

And you need not be on the wrong side of this King. The good news went out into all the world after Easter, after the ascension, and after Pentecost. The good news proclaims freedom to those who have been enslaved.

The only ones to whom the good news is not good news are those who want to remain enslaved—those who want to hold on to their evil. Those who say, “I am the way that I am, buzz off with your talk,” are on the wrong side of this King. Those who say, “Things are the way they are, you just have to accept it,” are on the wrong side of this King. Psalm 2 gives us this pertinent advice, “**Kiss the Son—kiss Jesus—lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.**” But then there is also this word of hope right after that: “**Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**”

That is a good way to encapsulate Easter: “**Blessed are all who take refuge in Jesus.**” Why are they so blessed? Because Jesus is king. Jesus rising from the dead shows that he is Christ the king. If you take refuge in him, then everything has to turn out for the good. Jesus is increasing what is good and making what is good eternal. Whatever evil afflicts you, whatever evil afflicts your family, whatever evil afflicts our society, whatever evil afflicts the whole world is temporary and passing away. Evil is not supreme. Evil is not unchangeable.

So don’t accept evil. You are not powerless before it so that your only choice is to accept it. In Christ you are not dealing with a superior force against who it is futile to fight. To be sure, it is easier not to fight. Giving up gives us a little bit of comfort, a little bit of peace. Thank God that Jesus didn’t accept evil. He fought it! He fought it to the death—and prevailed.

Alleluia Christ is risen!