

**Easter 2024 St Michael's 8am
Mark 16 v1-8**

“They said nothing because they were afraid.”

Mark records that, very early on the first day of the week, three women approach the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, on the way they suddenly realise they have forgotten a very practical problem. The huge stone in front of the entrance would have to be removed. When they arrive, they discover it has already been rolled back. Entering the tomb, they find a stranger is waiting for them. And Mark tells us that they were alarmed. First the young man reassures them, then he informs them that he

understands who they are seeking. The women knew what they were looking for. It was the dead body of their beloved master, in the tomb where they had seen his body laid after the crucifixion. The young man then announces some startling news “He has been raised; He is not here.” He points them to the place where they were expecting to see his body “Look, there is the place where they laid him.” See for yourselves, he was saying he’s not here.

To us the story of the empty tomb is familiar; to the women it was mind blowing, they just couldn’t comprehend it.

The women were looking for something known and expected. They were overwhelmed: with the experiences of Good Friday fresh in their minds, they clung to the memories of the Jesus they knew, and the experiences they understood. They looked where they expected his body to have been and saw only that it wasn't there.

Told to spread the good news that he had been raised, they fled in terror and amazement.

On Good Friday during the hour at the cross we thought about these same women and about how they had watched the events of the crucifixion from a distance. There is a subtle difference between a witness and an observer.

A witness speaks about what they have seen while an observer merely watches. The women were observers, watching the crucifixion from afar. Three days later, commissioned to tell the good news of the resurrection, they fled. They had seen the empty tomb, they had been given the promise that Jesus would go before them to Galilee, they had been told to take a specific message to tell the disciples. Yet when called to witness they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. They remained as they were before, observers.

On Good Friday I asked the question “What of us?” Are we witnesses or just observers?

Over the last few days, we have followed the account of Christ's passion. The familiar story has been retold while we have watched and listened.

On the first Easter day the women, who did eventually come closer, looked, ran away and “said nothing because they were afraid.”

And that is where the most ancient of the Marken manuscripts finished. But it is not the end of the story. If it had been we would not be here this morning. We are here, because people were not afraid to speak of the joyous news of Christ's resurrection.

For the women the awful shock of seeing the empty tomb needed to lead on to the discovery that Jesus lives. They could not cling to the old familiar Jesus, they had to accept that things had changed and would never be the same again. To experience the joy of the resurrection, they had to let go of the past and move on to the reality of the present. And so do we.

Today is Easter Day. The experience of Easter should change our lives. But we must decide, will we just watch silently from afar or will we obey the commission to go and tell. Will we say nothing to anyone because we

are afraid or will we let the risen Christ influence our lives to change us and enable us to witness to Him.

This Easter may our lips and our lives speak of the reality and the joy of the resurrection.

We are called to be an Easter people and so we boldly proclaim:-

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!