

2021 04 04 – Bewildered

Mark 16:1-8 (The Inclusive Bible)

On Wednesday, I was finally able to book an appointment for my COVID-19 vaccine. It was such a relief. It was a ray of hope in this never-ending pandemic. But then, Thursday afternoon, they announced that walk-in and drive-in clinics would be available in Swift Current this weekend. Now what do I do? Should I wait two weeks for what will probably be the Moderna vaccine or go today and get the AstraZeneca? Is there really a difference between the two?

I am so confused. I don't what to believe. I don't know what to do. It feels like I've been confused or bewildered for a year. The uncertainty—the not knowing—is exhausting. There are so many questions with changing answers:

- Masks – do we wear them or not?
- Worship – are in-person services worth the risk?
- Family – when will it be safe to gather in our homes?
- Vaccines – do we really need two shots, how effective are they & how long will they last?

A year into this pandemic, new questions with conflicting answers continue to appear.

And, of course, it's not just the uncertainty, there's fear too. A year ago we couldn't have imagined over 23,000 deaths in Canada, nearly 600,000 in the United States, and close to 3,000,000 in the world! So many lives lost and people are still dying. With the variants we are seeing more young people arriving in hospitals across our country and around the world. We still don't know whether the vaccines will work against the variants so, of course, we are

frightened. We are frightened for our very lives and the lives of those we love. We are frightened for our jobs, our businesses, for the economy itself.

The women fleeing from the tomb on that first Easter morning are also bewildered and trembling with fear. They went expecting to find the body of their rabbi and friend. They went ready to anoint his flesh with perfumed oils as was their custom. Their biggest worry was how on earth they were going to get that stone rolled away from the entrance. But when they arrived, the stone had already been moved and Jesus' body was gone!

As if that wasn't enough, there was a young person sitting beside the slab of rock where the body was supposed to be. The women trembled with fear. Who was this man and where was Jesus? The young man said, "Do not be amazed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the One who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they had laid him."

The women knew exactly where Jesus' body had been laid. They had followed him from Galilee, were part of the palm parade the previous Sunday, had served his final Passover supper in the upper room and were there, at Golgotha, when he died a brutal death on a wooden cross. They had heard his loud cry, and then his final breath. They had watched as Joseph of Arimathea wrapped his battered body in linen and laid it in a tomb cut out of the rock.

There was no question that Jesus was dead. So who was this man dressed in white, and what he was trying to tell them? The women were so confused and

frightened, it's amazing that they even heard the rest of what the young man said, "Now go and tell the disciples and Peter, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him just as he told you.'"

Could it be true? Is it possible that Jesus is somehow alive? Is it possible that he will be in Galilee to meet them? The authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John go on to tell the stories of that meeting. They tell us of Jesus' appearance in a locked room, the encounter on the Road to Emmaus, and a shared breakfast by the Sea of Galilee. They assure us that the disciples felt and were inspired by his risen presence.

But the Gospel of Mark ends here. It ends with the words, "They made their way out and fled from the tomb bewildered and trembling; but they said nothing to anyone, because they were so afraid."

I chose this reading for this Sunday. I chose this reading with this ending because I believe it speaks to this time that we are living in, this time of COVID-19. Like those women we are living on a wavering line between hope and fear. We are balancing on a wire between bewilderment and trust. We are wondering if it is foolish to expect some purpose or meaning to come out of this sea of death. Or is that kind of foolishness, that kind of trust, that kind of faith exactly what is needed at this time?

I believe those bewildered and trembling women still had hope. They had followed Jesus from Galilee. They had seen the power of Love working through

him. They knew in their hearts, that healing, even in the most tragic of circumstances, is possible. That the blind can see again, that the lame can walk, that even a troubled mind can be relieved of its demons. They had seen enough of the Easter reality to have hope in the possibility of new life even after death.

We have even more reason to hope. We know how the Easter story ends. We know that the power of Jesus' risen presence inspired his disciples to share the good news of God's love with the rest of the known world. We know that Jesus' message lived on through them and that it still lives on through us. So, even in the midst of our own bewilderment and fear, we can trust in the promise of Easter.

We can trust that, for now, staying apart is the right thing to do. We can trust that no matter which vaccine we take, it will make a difference. We can trust that eventually this pandemic will end. We can trust that even when it feels like we are all alone. We are not. The risen Christ is with us. The power of the Essence of Love surrounds. The Holy Mystery resides within us.

And like the disciples, we have Jesus to guide our path. Like them, we have his stories, his life, his death, and his resurrection to show us the way. So even in the midst of our trembling and fear we can trust that the Risen Christ will meet us where we are. We can trust that, in some way, new life will come from this pandemic. Yes, we are just foolish enough to believe it!

Christ is Risen. He has risen indeed. Alleluia!

Amen