

## Easter Day Sermon – April 12, 2020

### Mark 16: 1-8

“When you’re weary, feeling small . . .” That’s the great opening line in one of the great popular songs of all time. “Bridge Over Troubled Water” was written by Paul Simon in 1969, but it’s as fresh for us as if it had been written yesterday. Let me ask you, “Are you weary; are you feeling small; right now?” If you are, don’t lose heart. You’re part of a subgroup of millions and millions and millions of people all across the planet.

We’re all feeling a little weary, a little small. As the hours and the days turn into weeks, it’s becoming harder and harder to see what we really want to see. And you know, what we really want to see is how it’s all going to turn out. We want to fast forward to the end of the movie. We want to turn to the final chapter to see how the book ends.

Well, of course that’s not happening, and so the fatigue sets in. Weariness, fatigue is really insidious. It creeps up on you and before you know it, you’re worn out. During World War II, Gen. George C Marshall, who was Secretary of War (and a good Episcopalian), said: “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” He didn’t say that as a judgment. It was simply an observation of the human condition. I’m often reminded of that when I’m on a hike that has too much vertical and it’s harder and harder to put one foot in front of the other. Fatigue depletes our inner resources.

So, yes, if you’re weary, if you’re feeling small, you’re in good company. Now, Paul Simon wrote that beautiful song during a time when he was listening to a lot of gospel music. He said the song was influenced by Claude Jeter’s line, “I’ll be your bridge over deep water, if you trust in me,” which Jeter sang with his group The Swan Silvertones in 1950 in a song called “Mary, Don’t You Weep.” Inspired by Jeter’s

words, Simon's Bridge Over Troubled Water" is clearly Jesus, at least that's how I've always heard it.

This is so resonant for us in these days of weariness, a weariness brought on, in large part, because we don't know – we can't know – how the COVID-19 story's going to end. Which makes Mark's gospel, and Mark's account of the Resurrection, so resonant.

Do you remember how Mark's gospel begins? We have been studying Mark together online these last few weeks. Mark doesn't begin with the story of Jesus' birth as Matthew and Luke do, and not with a Creation story as in John's gospel. No, Mark's gospel begins like this: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Not "the good news." The "**beginning** of the good news." Mark isn't going to tell the whole story of the good news; just its beginning. And, then he proceeds, at almost breakneck speed, to tell the story of Jesus the challenging teacher, Jesus the compassionate healer, Jesus the reconciler and peacemaker, and finally, the story of the faithful Jesus, whose radical message of love and transformation was so threatening to the powers that be that they arrested him and executed him. Fear, it seems, would triumph over love.

But not so fast. The story that has just begun continues. The tomb is empty. Jesus has been raised and has gone on ahead to Galilee. And, the women who first witness this are amazed and afraid and struck into silence. And there, Mark ends his narrative; but the story goes on.

You see, this account of the empty tomb is clearly part of the **beginning** of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And, you and I, here today right now, are part of the story of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that is still going on. It's still unfolding. You belong to somebody who is going somewhere. And if that's not good news, well, I don't know what is.

Yes, but, you say, how do we make their story our story? How do we find that bridge over troubled water? This is going to seem counter-intuitive, but I believe it with all my heart. We need to surrender. That's how we find that bridge over troubled water. We surrender the need to know the end of the story. We can't know the end of the story because the end hasn't been written yet. So, surrender your need to control the ending; the need to make it have a happy ending. We just don't know. So, go to the inner room of your heart. Every day find the time and the place for real prayer. Say words if it's helpful but find the inner room in your heart and invite Jesus to join you. You may be surprised to find that he's already there! The bridge is right before you.

And, make sure you're connecting. Be honest with yourself and be honest with others about what you're experiencing. Don't be a hero. Forget that nonsense. We're all vulnerable right now and, you know, that's really a good thing. Because the vulnerable heart is an open heart.

As Leonard Cohen so wisely observed, "There's a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in." Let others see the light pouring in through that crack in your soul. Pick up the phone. Send a text or an email. And, just as importantly, invite whoever you're connecting with to open up to you, to share the crack in their soul. Listen deeply. Real human connection is a great vaccine for fatigue.

So, the story goes on. Here, today, in our own time of fear and anxiety and profound, deep fatigue, the story goes on. We are, each one of us, like the frightened women in front of the empty tomb. Mark's account of the Resurrection captures such a real human response. Filled with the deepest grief and weariness from their loss of hope, when they see that the tomb is empty, their first reaction isn't joy. It's fear. Sure, the young guy in a white robe sitting next to the empty tomb says, "Do not be alarmed." Right! Easy for you to say, buddy! But then, through their terror and amazement, from a place deep in their souls, these women find a little courage. The courage to take the next step and then

another. The courage to push through the fatigue and the weariness and the grief. The courage, if you'll permit me to mix a metaphor, to go in search of the bridge over troubled water.

Because, you see, my dear sisters and brothers in Christ, we really do know how the story ends. Not the COVID-19 story itself. That's just part of the bigger story. There have been pandemics, many worse than this one, down through the ages. In the midst of life, there is always the reality of death. But that's not the end of the bigger story. On this Easter morning, this beautiful Spring morning, we actually *can* look forward to the end of the story. Because, in the end, Love wins! That's right, that's the Easter promise, that's the Easter hope, the Easter joy. We are not stranded in those troubled waters. No, we are not. Because, you see, there is a Bridge.

*Bridge Over Troubled Water*

by Paul Simon (sung by Lacey Brown)

When you're weary, feeling small  
When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all, all  
I'm on your side, oh, when times get rough  
And friends just can't be found  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down

When you're down and out  
When you're on the street  
When evening falls so hard  
I will comfort you  
I'll take your part, oh, when darkness comes  
And pain is all around  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down.

Amen.