

Commandment One Easter Day

Text: Mark 16:1–8

Today we finish our review of the Ten Commandments which we started on Ash Wednesday.

In the First Commandment, God forbids US from having any other gods than him. We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.

Because he wants to be God *for us! For our benefit.* **“You shall have no other gods.”** In fact, there is no other God than the man Jesus, the Christ. Let’s imagine we were there.

You had such high hopes in him. Jesus was everything to you. You followed him because you believed he was the Messiah, the promised Savior. He did things only God could do. He said words only God could possibly say. This always amazed you, many times to the point of absolute fear. You were there when he healed a paralytic and forgave his sins. It amazed everyone (Mk 2:12). When he stilled the storm, you

were terrified and asked one another: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).

You were astonished and absolutely amazed when he brought Jairus's dead daughter back to life (5:42) and when he walked on the water (6:51). On the mountain, his appearance changed, transfigured; you were scared out of your wits (9:6). Could he be the One?

But then he went and preached a scandalous sermon series about insistently heading up to Jerusalem. He had a Jerusalem mania. A Jerusalem on the brain. Obsessed with doing a Jerusalem he was. Three times he boldly and audaciously proclaimed that he'd be . . . handed over to the religious bigwigs. Arrested! Manhandled! Spit upon! Relentlessly ridiculed! If that wasn't bad enough, he resolutely promised that he'd be put on death row, flogged, and killed. Then he said something about rising on the third day. Really? Again, you were totally blown away. Astonished. Genuinely scared.

But you'd get over it. And you thought he would too. That Jerusalem thing was just a fad—you thought. After all, these kinds of things don't happen—aren't supposed to happen—*ever*—to Messiahs. And Jesus was the real deal. At least you hoped. Especially after all the miraculous things he did and the authoritative sermons he preached!

Now what? He's dead. Buried. What good is a dead and buried Jesus? Now, what are you to do?

All that's left is to let the ladies who took care of his physical needs during his earthly life do their thing. They looked after him. Might as well do it one last time. Spices in hand, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome head to the grave to anoint his dead body.

Strange. Very bizarre. The large stone has been rolled away from the

entrance to the tomb. Might as well go on in. Another big surprise.

They see an angel. Alarming! Shocking! "No need to be alarmed, ladies. I know you expected to see the corpse of crucified Nazarene Jesus. Well, he's not here. He is Risen!

See. Take a look. This is where they put his body. Not there anymore! Now, you go tell his disciples and especially Peter. He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see him there just as he told you." Can it be? Really? Risen from the dead?

Absolutely! Just like he said! On the third day . . . ? Wow! The biggest miracle of all! Straight from his mouth! He said so! Resurrection! His! On the third day!

Consequently, you and the women are visibly shaken. You never expected this to happen! Your hearts are pounding. The adrenaline is flowing. Your minds are racing. Your hands are trembling. All your

thoughts are jumbled, can't think straight at the moment.

So all you can do is run. You're so afraid. Mouths zipped. But what was that other thing he said, something else the preacher in the tomb shared. After all, sermons are so easily forgotten, in one ear and out the other. He said: ***"But go, tell his disciples and Peter. He'll meet you in Galilee. You'll see him there. He said so. He promised."***

You're reluctant to go there, aren't you? Of course you are. After all, you've all got a bad conscience. You and Peter denied and renounced Jesus and called down curses on yourselves. You deserted him. Left him high and dry when push came to shove. You wouldn't be caught dead hanging around the humiliated, arrested, and sentenced-to-death Jesus. What a difficult and dreadful falling away you committed! You wouldn't let Jesus be God *for you* in his shocking suffering and appalling Good Friday dying! You stayed away! You had no use for him!

What sin! What treachery! What idolatry!

This is why you're so hesitant to go meet Jesus in Galilee. You are uncertain. After all, what do you expect from Jesus—the Son of God, whom you abandoned and disowned—if he's truly risen from the dead? Payback? Retribution and a divine reckoning of the highest order against you for your unfaithful sins against him, right?

No. Not hardly. Not even close. He is risen! From the tomb! Not to give you what you expect but what you never, ever imagined. It's totally amazing what he will give to you.

He will tell you the best news you could ever hear as a sinner. It's this: "I Am God for You.

I am not your enemy. I am not against you, but I am God *for you*—in this way: I died for you, Peter, and the rest of you disciples. I took all your sin. I buried it in the black hole of my tomb, and I left it there

forever. It is no more. I forgive you. I don't count your sin against you at all."

Forgiveness! It's what his rising from the tomb is all about. His divine forgiveness is *for you*. He comes to you. He meets you in the Sacrament today, too, in order to act as God *for you*. Listen.

His crucified and risen body and blood he gives you with the bread and wine with the promise that you are forgiven. "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," he declares.

The fruit or benefits of such divine Good Friday and Easter forgiveness are the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Because Jesus rose, his Good Friday death was not in vain. It truly counts for you and for me. We are forgiven. Since he forgives us, we, too, will be raised on the Last Day from the grave. He will not leave us there. We are precious to him—God for us, Jesus. As you believe, so you have. Happy Easter!

In the name of Jesus. Amen

