

16When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸Trembling* and bewildered**, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.^[a]

2 Corinthians 1:20 New Living Translation (NLT)

²⁰For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory.

*Greek: Same root from which the English word "trauma" is derived.

** Greek: Same root from which the English word "ecstasy" is derived.

Promises. All of us make them. All of us break them. Promises kept are a blessing! A promise that is kept represents a relationship with a person who is true, reliable, dependable, and trustworthy. A promise kept is one of the greatest experiences in human life! In contrast, a promise broken, represents just the opposite—a failure of trust. The disappointment, the damage to a relationship can be life-changing, depending upon the relationship and the significance of the promise.

In a relatively brief time, we quickly learn the difference between those who are promise-keepers and those who are promise breakers.

Politicians—of any party, and used car salesmen are notorious as those who make promises will later be broken. I'm not sure I can tell you whom to trust because, sadly, even clergy have fallen from grace in this regard.

The fact remains, all of us make promises. We have good intentions. We want to be promise keepers, but we often fail.

During a wedding rehearsal, the groom approached the pastor with an unusual request. "I'll give you \$100 if you'll change the wedding vows," the groom said. "When you get to me and the part where it asks if I promise to 'forsake all others, and be faithful to her forever,' I'd appreciate it if you'd just leave that part out." He passed the minister a \$100 bill and walked away.

During the wedding ceremony, when it came to the exchanging of vows, the pastor looked the groom in the eye and asked: "Will you promise to obey her every wish and command, serve her breakfast in bed each morning, and swear eternally before God that you will not ever even look at another woman, as long as you both shall live?" The groom gulped, looked around, and replied in a weak voice, "Yes."

After the wedding, the groom pulled the pastor aside and hissed, "I thought we had a deal!" The pastor thrust the \$100 bill back into the groom's hand and replied, "Sorry, the bride made me a much better offer."

source: <http://www.jokebuddha.com/Promise#ixzz5INkpFQXT>

Marriage is a covenant, an agreement in which two people make promises to love, honor, cherish...and serve each other breakfast in bed! A covenant is an actually legal contract, involving promises made by two parties. God made numerous covenants in the OT—with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, and so on. Why more than one covenant? Because predictably, people would fail to live up to their side of the bargain. We break our promises. But God continued, graciously, to form covenants and make promises to Israel. The good news? We worship a promise-keeping God!

All four of the Gospels include similar but slightly different accounts of the event on that Sunday, following Jesus' crucifixion and burial. Mark reports that the same three women present at the cross, at Jesus' burial, are now together again,

early on Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus. (Mark 15:40, 47, 16:1) Mark reports their conversation as they approach the tomb, wondering aloud, who will roll the stone away, so they might gain access to Jesus' body.

However, when they arrive, the entrance is clear, the stone moved aside already. Intent on their mission, the women enter the tomb. When they do, they encounter a 'young man'-- an angelic messenger—who does all the talking:

⁶“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He was raised! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

The messenger senses their astonishment/wonder/distress, and attempts to calm their fears. He knows why they are there. In naming the one they are seeking, “Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified”, he confirms the historicity of the crucifixion. Further, he invites them to examine the now empty tomb, announcing: *“He was raised! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”*

The messenger and the empty tomb are NOT what the women expect! “The empty tomb testifies that the Jesus who died as a bodily being, was raised as a bodily being.” (p.494 J. Edwards)

Jesus himself had made this promise, recorded earlier by Mark (14:28 NLT): *²⁸But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.”* A resurrection rendezvous!

This promise is repeated now by the messenger, with the addition: ***“There you will see him, just as he told you.”*** In order to see Jesus, they must look ahead, beyond the empty tomb! The promise of Jesus is certain.

In Mark's gospel, there are numerous occasions that occur where things are **“just as he told you”**:

- the finding of the colt for the Palm Sunday parade, and the upper room ready for them to use for the Passover meal
- the betrayal of Judas
- the denial by Peter and the flight of all the disciples, as well as

--the rejection, delivering up, condemnation, mocking, death and resurrection of Jesus. (p. 285, Interp. Bible Commentary, Mark, by L. Williamson, Jr.)

Here is yet another prediction and promise: "Go to Galilee, I'll meet you there!" Jesus' promise is a sure thing.

Perhaps you are familiar with that well-known theologian, Theodore Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. In his book, Horton Hatches The Egg, we are introduced to Horton the Elephant. When Mayzie, the duck mother wants to abandon her egg, she enlists Horton as a most unlikely substitute.

Mayzie the mother duck promises:

"I won't be gone long, sir. I give you my word.

I'll hurry right back, Why I'll never be missed..." (A promise broken!)

Horton replies:

"I'll sit on your egg and I'll try not to break it. I'll stay and be faithful. I mean what I say."

Horton proceeded to keep his word as he sat on that egg...through a terrible rain storm, through autumn and winter...even a snow storm. Further trials await: taunting by his animal friends who later abandon him. Then hunters threaten him.

"Did he run? **He did not!**

HORTON STAYED ON THAT NEST!

He held his head high, and he threw out his chest.

And he looked at the hunters as much as to say:

*"Shoot if you must, But I **won't** run away!*

I meant what I said

And I said what I meant.....

An elephant's faithful

One hundred percent!"

Then Horton is captured and sold to a circus, after a torturous journey.

Nothing...nothing will deter Horton from keeping his promise.

He remains steadfastly on that nest, repeating his promise:

"I meant what I said, and I said what I meant,

An elephant's faithful, one hundred percent!"

(I won't ruin the story's ending except to say that Horton's faithfulness is rewarded! New life results!)

In this age of “fake news”, and what seems to be the proliferation of lies and dishonesty by very public figures, when celebrities go so far as to stage personal attacks on themselves, as Jussie Smollett did, how we yearn for people in our lives like Horton. We long for truth-tellers. We want and need those who can be counted upon to speak the truth and keep their word. We need those whose word is their bond, who keep their promises, “one hundred percent”.

Search no more. The resurrection is the best kept promise, ever.

Jesus said what he meant, and he meant what he said.

Jesus is faithful, truthful, trustworthy—one hundred percent!

In fact, in Mark’s Gospel, the Risen Living Lord does not hang out in the tomb or in the garden waiting to be discovered. No, Jesus is on the move!

The messenger commands the women to “*go and tell the disciples and Peter*” what they have seen and heard, and to remind them of Jesus’ promise; a promise kept! **“He will meet you there, just as he told you.”**

Implicit in this promise is forgiveness, and a renewed call to discipleship. Explicit is an invitation to all the disciples--and especially Peter, to meet up with him at the previously agreed upon rendezvous in Galilee.

Why is Peter singled out? Perhaps because the gospels record Peter’ fabulous *failure to keep his promise to Jesus*—to follow him to the very end, even if it meant dying with him!

Why meet up in Galilee? That was home turf for the disciples and ground zero for the mission to the Gentiles. When we are most disoriented, being in familiar surroundings is comforting, so Jesus will meet them there.

The conclusion of Mark’s gospel leaves us hanging...literally. Verse 8 is actually an incomplete sentence, a dangling preposition! Scholars believe that the so called “second ending” was likely added in the second century by scribe—maybe a Greek teacher who felt the need to wrap up loose ends, and tidy up the narrative.

Nevertheless, the fact remains, that like the women on that first Easter Sunday, we too are confronted with an empty tomb. We must come to terms with its implications.

Of all the Easter Gospels, Mark's story invites us to stand where those first trembling witnesses stood. Those three women didn't see Jesus. Neither have we. They didn't hear Jesus call their names. Neither have we. They didn't touch his wounded hands, neither have we. The narrative is left for us, the readers, to complete.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome stand beside us. In their silence they remind us that a life of faith is shaped by "trauma" and "ecstasy", trembling and amazement. The open ended story is up to you and me to finish, because *the story of what God is doing in and through Jesus isn't over at the empty tomb, you see. It's only just getting started. Resurrection isn't a conclusion, it's an invitation. And Jesus' triumph over death, sin, and hate isn't what Mark's Gospel is all about. Rather, Mark's Gospel is all about setting us up to live resurrection lives and continue the story of God's redemption of the world.* (David Lose)

The Apostle Paul would write in 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NLT)

"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ, with a resounding "YES!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "yes") ascends to God for his glory."

The question for us is this:

Will we—will you and I—accept the invitation to follow Jesus to Galilee and beyond? Jesus promises—that those who follow him, will indeed, see him—Jesus, the Risen, Living Lord!

Jesus meant what he said, and said what he meant.

Jesus keeps his promise, one hundred percent!

[Pray]

Risen Lord:

How much we need you to tell us the truth: not only about ourselves and our sin, but also about how much we are loved and forgiven! We yearn to know the Truth who will set us free! Grant to us your Resurrection Life, today and forever. We pray this in the name of the One who meant what he said, and who said what he meant...the Promise-keeper, Jesus, Amen.