



Pastor Robyn Hogue

Easter Sermon

Secrets People Take to the Grave Don't Often Stay There

Mark 16: 1-8

April 1, 2018

Skyline Presbyterian Church

Star Wars sequels/prequels, reality television and soap operas make great use of secrets long buried coming back to shock, distress and utterly amaze the living. The long-lost heir to the fortune who was thought dead shows up at the family reunion. The man he knew as dad, it turns out, was not his biological father. The reason the family immigrated was to seek a new life...but the backstory involved fleeing from the law. Lo and behold, the results from the DNA kit that got mailed off reveal an entirely unexpected family heritage.

Grave secrets from one generation come back to life in the next no matter how silent the witnesses to them remained. How is that possible when the parties involved are dead and buried?

Secrets people take to the grave don't necessarily stay there. They have a life of their own in family lore, and future generations and communities with a propensity to not mind their own business will surely inquire. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome fled the tomb in terror and the stranger nearby visiting a spouse's grave got a glimpse of them and wondered what caused such a reaction. Even though they told "no one nothing" as the Greek in Mark wants to emphasize, there were people in town who wondered about the large stone adjacent to the tomb that it had previously covered.

These three women were in shock, and who could blame them? Don't the dead stay dead? How many strangers in white robes have proclaimed the gospel to you at the graveside? Let's think about this: People think in frameworks. To be accepted, the truth must fit a person's frame. If facts do not fit the frame, the frame stays and facts bounce off. So, if we're coming to anoint a dead body, news of a living person doesn't fit the frame. No wonder they were distressed, stupefied and agitated. No wonder they told "no one nothing." Who would have believed them anyway?

And yet, we know the truth that didn't fit their frame...or anyone else's for that matter, because someone, at some point, said something, to someone else. Grave secrets have a way of not staying secret those who discover them often must re-frame their entire lives because all they thought was true, well, wasn't.

This is what Easter does. It reframes absolutely everything when the grave secret comes out.

Imagine with me the two Marys and Salome talking among themselves at the Galilean Starbucks, and the person at the next table overhears them as Mary leans in close to Salome and says, "What exactly did that guy at the garden say? Did I hear it right? Jesus, *our Jesus*, the Jesus of Nazareth, the very one we saw brutally crucified, is no longer dead and has been raised? Did he tell us we'd see Jesus again here, in Galilee? Is that what you heard?" And Salome nods, with

eyes like saucers, still afraid. And from that Starbucks, the grave secret starts to leak no less than the words of a White House insider to a Washington Post reporter.

It's hard to take a secret to the grave because we live in community where people talk and neighbors notice and privacy then as now is often an illusion. After someone's death, people begin to talk. We even say things that we would never have said during their lifetime.

“You know, I thought she'd have left a larger estate to the kids given how she lived such a lavish lifestyle.”

Or “He lived like such a pauper. Who knew he left so much to charity?”

“Well, you know, he kept to himself mostly, but he was a little, I don't know, sort of strange.”

“I wondered why the curtains were always closed.”

“Once I saw the police in their driveway.”

“As soon as I heard it on the news I thought: It's her. I just knew it.”

Secrets don't stay secret very often even when the ones closest to them keep quiet. We don't know what happened next with Mary and Mary and Salome because Mark's Gospel doesn't tell us, but we *do know* the secret they tried to keep did not remain in the grave. We know what that stranger proclaimed: “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, the one you are looking for, has been raised. You can look all you want in every corner of this tomb, but you won't find Him here. Go tell Peter and the disciples because Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee and He will meet you there, just like He told you.”

If we had been with them, we would have come to the grave looking through the frame of death, ready to anoint a body, but the fact is, Jesus is alive and even if we can't grasp it yet, the fact remains: He has been raised! Time to reframe and begin looking for Jesus among the living, not in the graveyard, but in Galilee.

But, it's hard to reframe. Let me illustrate: Under trial, Galileo was forced to recant that the earth moves around the sun. As the story goes, Galileo said, “And yet it moves.” In other words, people's inability to see the truth does not make it any less truthful. Mary and Mary and Salome, and perhaps you and I, may be so stupefied, terrified and flummoxed at life that we tell no one nothing, and yet, Jesus has still been raised and *that* truth will not be squelched.

According to Mark's telling, they said nothing and yet, Jesus still lives. Thanks to be to God that the truth that reframes everything is not dependent upon us. No matter what we say, or don't say, this grave secret is no secret at all. This exposed grave secret, in fact, means we no longer need to be afraid of our own secrets, the things we want no one to know—the dead places, pre-dawn worries, shocking, distressing ideas, repulsive speech, denigrating behaviors and shameful attitudes—can be buried, dead with Jesus, because He has taken our sin to the grave with Him.

All the burdens and beliefs that have limited or distorted the frames of our imaginations and expectations are no match for the truth that Jesus Christ is risen.

Death has lost its sting!

The redemption of the world has been won!

And through our Risen Lord all things are possible!

We, with Mary and Mary and Salome, have heard this news. That stranger in white has said it plain: “Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified. He has been raised. He is not here. Look, there is the place they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.”

Perhaps this good news is a truth than your current frame can't accept. That's alright and I'm glad you're here. Jesus still lives! Grave secrets don't stay in the grave. When we are ready to hear them, they will reframe everything. And we will be free.