

There's This Guy

Mark 16:1-8

The Resurrection of Our Lord, April 21, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There was this guy. He was from Nazareth. He went into the synagogue one day and cast out a demon. I know that you are all modern people and you don't actually believe in demon possession, but believe me. He cast out a demon! The demon was in a man causing him to act strangely. The man from Nazareth spoke a word and we didn't expect anything to happen because other people have tried this unsuccessfully, but when this man spoke the demon left. The man who had the demon was normal.

This same man from Nazareth saw a leper. The leper asked the man from Nazareth to heal the leper. The leper seemed to believe that if the man from Nazareth were willing the man from Nazareth could help him with his leprosy. In fact the leper thought that the man from Nazareth could purify him. Jesus told the leper that He was willing and then told the leper to be clean.

Like the leper could be clean just by a man telling him to be clean! Cleansing from leprosy takes doctors and a lot of time and a lot of prayer. But this man was cleansed when the man from Nazareth said so!

This same man from Nazareth saw a paralyzed man. The paralyzed man had these friends who brought him to Jesus. They got the paralyzed man to Jesus and initially Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven. That seems safe enough. Who could tell either way whether or not Jesus could forgive sins? But then Jesus told the man to get up and take his mat and go home. There is no way a paralyzed man could get up and take his mat and go home. But as soon as Jesus said it the paralyzed man got up and took his mat and went home.

This same man from Nazareth went to the home of Jairus. Jairus was a synagogue ruler. It was kind of amazing that Jairus went to Jesus in the first place because Jesus had been thrown out of other synagogues. Jairus had a daughter who was ill. The disease appeared to be terminal. Things were getting bad. Perhaps it was because Jesus had done so many other things that Jairus considered Jesus to be his last alternative. At any rate Jairus went to Jesus and asked Jesus to come and heal Jairus' daughter. Jesus agreed to do so and went with Jairus. On the way they were delayed by a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years and had grabbed the hem

of Jesus' garment in order to be healed. The delay was not long, but it was long enough that Jairus' little girl died.

That would have stopped anyone else. Physicians would have told Jairus that there was nothing more that they could do. In fact Jesus insisted upon going to the home of Jairus anyway. When Jesus shows up the mourners have already gathered to weep over the little girl's death. These mourners are professionals. They know death when they see it, so when Jesus told them that the girl was asleep they laughed at Him thinking that He meant natural sleep.

Jesus put them out of the room where the girl was. He had to in order to get them to stop wailing. The only people Jesus allowed in the room were Jairus and his wife and Peter, James, and John. That is how we know what happened in the room. There were five witnesses of these events. We have their names so that we may check them out. Witnesses are known by their fruits.

Jesus took the little girl's hand. Now understand this was a dead girl. Then Jesus talks to the dead girl. Weird enough that Jesus should talk to a dead person in the presence of others (most people talk to dead people when they are alone), but when Jesus spoke to this little girl, He told her to do something. He told her to get up and He said it in such a way that it was evident that He expected the little dead girl to actually do it. Even though the girl was dead and could not hear what He said to her, even though the girl was dead and could not obey Him even if she could somehow hear Him, when He said it, she got up.

Once when this man from Nazareth was in a boat with His disciples a windstorm arose on the Sea of Galilee. Have you ever been in a windstorm on the Sea of Galilee? Sailors and fishermen have to be very careful on the Sea of Galilee. These things can blow up in a moment with little warning in advance. Many people die by drowning when these storms come up.

It made sense, therefore, when one of these storms blows up while Jesus and His disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee that the disciples are scared to death. They think that they are going to die. Those are rational thoughts! Of course, they are going to die. This is one of those squalls that has taken the lives of people they have known and loved and worked with.

They wake Jesus. Why not? One more person to bail water out of the boat. Jesus stood up and spoke to the wind and the sea and commanded them to be calm. I would have thought anyone a lunatic who tried at trick like that. Who would be loony enough to command meteorological phenomena and expect their obedience? The man from Nazareth would and He got it. The wind and the sea became calm.

He spoke to blind people and bid them see and they saw. He spoke to the ears of deaf people. Mind you He did not speak to the deaf person himself, but rather Jesus spoke to the deaf man's ears. The deaf man's ears cannot hear Jesus. They are deaf! But Jesus talks to them like the ears of a deaf man can hear Him. Jesus tells the deaf ears to be opened, the idea being so that they could hear. And they were opened!

The man from Nazareth was like that. When He said something it came to pass. After being with Him a while you began to expect something to happen when He said something.

Then the man from Nazareth began to do some eerie things.

He wanted to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. Anyone who knew the prophet Zechariah knew what Jesus was trying to do. Jesus wanted to claim His inheritance as the rightful heir of David's throne. He could not have picked a worse time to do this! The Romans were occupying Israel. They had divided Israel into provinces. A Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, was in charge of Judea. This was a lousy time to mount a campaign to become the King of Israel.

But Jesus did not seem to care and He gave odd instructions in order to get this done. He told His disciples to go into a village and told them that they would find a colt tied there. Jesus instructed them to untie the colt and bring it to Him. That was not odd although it was a little odd that there just happened to be a colt there when He said so. What was really odd was when Jesus instructed His disciples that if anyone said anything to them about taking a colt that did not belong to them that they should simply say, "The Lord needs it." Yeah right. Like that is going to work. The people who own the colt are supposed to believe that these disciples represent the Most High God and that He wants their colt! Doesn't Psalm 50 say that the animals on a thousand hills belong to the Lord? The people who own this colt or anyone else is going to think that this is a con job.

But those disciples go into the village. Lo and behold, the colt is tied there just like Jesus said. His disciples untie and sure as a world the people standing there, probably the colt's owners, say to the disciples, "Why are you untying it?" The disciples did exactly what Jesus told them to do. "The Lord has need of it." And it worked! They let the disciples take the colt and Jesus sat on it and fulfilled the prophesy of Zechariah and rode into Jerusalem in triumph. Everyone thought He was the King of Israel.

Once the man from Nazareth was in Jerusalem, things did not go so well. He got into an extended debate with the temple administration as to whether or not He was the

legitimate heir of David here to sit on David's throne. Jesus could not convince His own people that He was the King of Israel. Never mind trying to convince Pontius Pilate.

Jesus won the debates, but winning the battles made it seem like He was losing the war. One of His own apostles plotted with the chief priests and the elders to betray Jesus to them and have Him killed.

And then Jesus did another one of those weird little things. Jesus had chosen the time of the Passover to ride into Jerusalem in triumph on the donkey. When the Jews celebrated Passover at this time thousands of pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate it. You know how a big event is. Any of you ever been to the Indianapolis 500? Ever tried to find a place to stay or a place to park? That is how it was in Jerusalem at this time. The early pilgrims would find places to stay in Jerusalem. The residents of Jerusalem would house pilgrims in their homes so that people could be in Jerusalem for the Passover. Even with that there was not enough room for everyone. Many pilgrims would stay in the outlying villages of Jerusalem and go into the city in order to participate in the festivities. Sometimes people just camped out in the open fields around Jerusalem. There were that many people there.

So the disciples approach Jesus and ask Him where they were to prepare for Him to eat the Passover. He told them this, "Go into the city and you will find a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him and enter the house where he goes. Say to the master of the house, 'The teacher says, "Where is the room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'"

There are two strange things about that statement. First of all, getting water from a well was women's work in the ancient near east. No man would do that, so if there was a man doing that someone was desperate because he did not have enough maid servants to get that done or even a wife or daughters. How would such a man have a place ready for Passover? Well, at least it would make the one they were supposed to follow easy to identify.

Then secondly, every home in Jerusalem must be packed with people. Jesus should have made His reservation weeks ago. How does He expect at this late hour to just up and find a place in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with His disciples?

And yet when the disciples go into Jerusalem they find the man with the water jar. They follow him and sure as a world the master of the house has a place for Jesus to celebrate the Passover with His disciples.

When Jesus says something it has this funny way of happening.

Jesus told His apostles that one of them would betray Him. Even one among His intimate followers would betray Him. As astounding as such a betrayal would be, it came to pass.

Jesus told Peter that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed twice in the morning. Peter said that He would die with Jesus. He said He would never deny Jesus. All of the other disciples said the same. Jesus told them that they would all abandon Him that night.

In spite of the fact that the apostles, Peter in particular, said they would never abandon or deny Him, that is exactly what happened. The apostles abandoned Jesus when Judas betrayed Him and had Him arrested. Even though Peter lingered for a while and followed Jesus to His initial trial before Caiaphas, Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed twice.

The word of Jesus has this strange way of coming to pass.

What I have just recounted to you is a case history. It is a case history of Jesus from Nazareth. Witnesses have given the testimony that forms the case file on Jesus of Nazareth. That testimony has been gathered together in one place. And why wouldn't it be? With someone as important as Jesus from Nazareth it makes sense to have a case file on Him.

That case file is what you call the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Bible is the collection of eyewitness testimony gathered together in one place. It is gathered together in one place because that is what you do with case files.

The Bible is holy because this particular case file has to do with important matters of life and death for all people. While the Bible is holy it is still a case file. Here is the eyewitness testimony. The eyewitnesses testify to the word of Jesus from Nazareth and how the Word of Jesus from Nazareth always came to pass even when it seemed improbable or impossible.

That being the case, consider this word of Jesus: "The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of wicked men." Jesus liked to call Himself the Son of Man so here He is talking about Himself. "The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of wicked men. They will kill Him. On the third day He will rise from the dead."

This is one more impossible thing that Jesus said. This is like the things that He said to paralyzed men and deaf ears. This is like the things that He said to meteorological phenomena and dead little girls. Only this one, He said three times.

I suppose the first two things are at least believable. It is at least possible that someone could be betrayed into the hands of wicked men even someone as sly as Jesus

from Nazareth who had eluded crowds before. I suppose that is possible that wicked people would put Him to death. But rise from the dead? Could He do that? Did He do that?

He did other impossible things, like raising the dead and commanding the wind and the sea. Why not rising from the dead too?

One of the last times that the man from Nazareth predicted His resurrection He told His disciples that after He rose from the dead He would meet them in Galilee. Galilee is the Roman province north of Judea where Jerusalem was. When Jesus died the disciples were aware of His death. If you had been there, you would have been aware of His death also. Many people attended His execution. If Jesus were to rise from the dead and go to Galilee the disciples would have to travel some distance to get there to meet Him.

Now here is the business about Easter and faith and the Bible and the witnesses. If you had been among the original disciples of Jesus of Nazareth and knew the things that He had said and how they came to pass, once He was dead, would you have gone to Galilee to meet Him?

Christ is Risen!