

Skedaddle

Compare Matthew 28:1-7 and Mark 16:1-7

Matthew 27:51-53

Luke 24:33-43

Matthew 28:1-7

[1] Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre.

[2] And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.

[3] His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

[4] And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

[5] But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

[6] He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

[7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you."

Mark 16:1-7

[1] And when the sabbath was past, Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

[2] And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen.

[3] And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?"

[4] And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; -- it was very large.

[5] And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed.

[6] And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him.

[7] But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you."

Matthew 27:51-53

[51] And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split;

[52] the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,

[53] and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Luke 24:33-43

[33] And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them,

[34] who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

[35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

[36] As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them.

[37] But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.

[38] And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts?"

[39] See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have."

[41] And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

[42] They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

[43] and he took it and ate before them.

### Skedaddle, Part 1

If you came to our Easter breakfast this morning and celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ by clogging your arteries with "godly grease," you saw our world famous empty tomb created by William Kruger. As William puts this magnificent, faith-inspiring, guaranteed to lift your spirits empty tomb on our communion table, let's give him some applause.

William, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, constructed this empty tomb last year and brought it to Wedgewood on Easter and he very kindly brought it to the church again this year for the benefit, edification, and spiritual development of those who are new around here,-----  
-and for those of you who needed an extra empty tomb dose, and you know who you are.

I told William last year that if Jesus had been in a tomb as nice as that, Jesus would have never left it. The empty tomb wouldn't have been empty. Why leave the Ritz Carlton of tombs unless you just absolutely have to leave it?

Well, as it turns out, the real empty tomb of history may not have been empty after all. Don't look at me like I'm a liberal preacher who doesn't know the Bible.

Yes, if you read Matthew's gospel, Mary Magdalene and someone described as "the other Mary" went to the tomb to put spices on what by then would be Jesus' stinking to high heaven body. And yes, you are right, Matthew's gospel informs us there was a great earthquake, perhaps an earthquake on the order of a San Francisco type earthquake. But whatever the magnitude of the earthquake, it was enough to jar the stone which had been at the entrance of Jesus' tomb. So when Mary Magdalene and this other Mary show up at the tomb this heavenly

take a jaunt to the earth angel is sitting on this earthquake rolled away stone. And I don't know if this angel had work experience in the heavenly real estate division, but when the ladies showed up on the scene this angel offered the ladies a tour of the empty tomb, empty that is, of Jesus' body.

Of course, the women probably immediately assumed Jesus' body had been stolen. That surely was their first reaction. But this angel told them, and this is what filled them with joy---this angel told them that Jesus had risen from this tomb, and in fact, this very second was going ahead of them to Galilee. "So skedaddle," the angel said.

So where's the non-empty tomb I was referring to?

You have to turn to Mark's gospel to find that. In contrast to Matthew's gospel which has Mary Magdalene and this "other Mary" arriving at the tomb, Mark's gospel reports that Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb. So you have in Mark not two women, but three women, and here they all are identified. Also in contrast to Matthew's gospel, in Mark it just says the stone was rolled back. No San Francisco type earthquake mentioned. And unlike Matthew, there is no angel sitting on this stone outside the tomb. Rather, inside this tomb, the operative word being "inside", INSIDE the tomb is a young man---not identified as an angel mind you, but a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, which technically makes the empty tomb not empty.

So maybe---this is just an idea---maybe William Kruger needs to make a Matthew gospel type empty tomb which really is empty and also make a second tomb, this one with a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side. Hey, it's just an idea. Obama can ignore his pastor, you can ignore your pastor, AT YOUR OWM PERIL, AT THE RISK OF YOUR IMMEDIATE DEMISE.

Actually, we could need even more empty tomb displays than I've suggested because I've yet to factor in the empty tomb scenes in Luke and John, but you know there's a limit to how much you can confuse the Wedgewoodians. For now, let's just stick with Matthew and Mark. Despite their differences, what Matthew and Mark have in common is that both report Jesus' body is not in the tomb, and both have the women instructed to go tell the disciples that they will see Jesus in Galilee.

And that's what really matters, isn't it? Yes, the accounts have notable discrepancies, but isn't the main thing that Jesus isn't in either tomb, that Jesus has been resurrected?

Well, yes, but guess what? And here's where Christians miss the boat, misunderstand the gospels. They weren't expecting the resurrection of just one person.

New Testament scholars, N. T. Wright and Amy Jill Levine, both point out that they were expecting-----at least some Jews, not all of them-----they were expecting a general resurrection. The kingdom of God would arrive on earth, the forces of evil would be defeated,

and-----and the dead saints of the past would come out of their graves and life would be-----wonderful.

Matthew's gospel, in fact, picks up on this, with people coming out of graves. (Matthew 27:51-53) The puzzling thing, to the disciples, though, is why the general resurrection stopped. Hey, the general resurrection seemed to be off to a great start. Jesus was resurrected. The dead people mentioned in Matthew were resurrected walking around town, but then-----but then there's this halt, this standstill, this interruption, this big question mark. What about everybody else? Why weren't they resurrected? And where is this kingdom of God?

The apostle Paul, who seemed to have an answer for everything, you know people like that, don't you?----the Apostle Paul years later says Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection, the others would be resurrected in due time. But I want to underscore this, nobody, nobody was expecting the resurrection of a messiah and nobody was expecting the resurrection of only a few people, and nobody envisioned a delay in the party.

So where does that leave us? It's Easter for Christ's sake, preacher, can't you give us a word of hope on Easter?

Hold on to that question. After the choir sings, and we read a few more scripture lessons, I'll tell you what I think.

### Skedaddle, Part 2

We've got a general resurrection that gets started but doesn't get pulled off and we've got conflicting Easter narratives. So where does that leave us? Can somebody find a preacher who can give us some Easter hope?

Where does that leave us? I tell you where it leaves me, Mr. Liberal skeptic myself. It leaves me unable to drop the questions. I'm not able---you may be able to pull it off, but I can't forget the questions and treat them as if they don't exist. I'm just not able to do that. But at some point I turn my focus beyond the questions, at some time and place, I put the questions at least temporarily in a footnote and I let my heart take center stage. Can you do that? Can you turn the volume down on your brain and let your heart be front and center?

With Easter that's what I do. And when I usher my brain down to the footnote area and I open the door for my heart to get in the driver's seat behind the wheel, I find my heart yearning, yearning to be like-----to be like that angel sitting on that earthquake moved stone. And like that angel said to the women at the empty tomb, I want to say to you skedaddle. Yes, you. You skedaddle on over to Galilee. There's someone waiting to see you. There's someone who wants to be with you. There's someone who wants to spend time with you. There's someone who wants to speak to you and listen to you. There's someone who will not forsake you or

leave you. So you go. Don't tarry. Hurry now. Go to Galilee and pack all the hope you can and carry it with you. My heart yearns to tell you that.

One of my favorite theologians---no not Karl Barth or Paul Tillich or one the Niebuhr's----I know about you liberal Baptists and your sophistication----one of my favorite theologians, Jerry Clower, famous for his southern humor including the coon huntin' story-----Knock him out John-----Before you die you make sure you hear that Coon huntin' story.-----Jerry Clower says his mama was a teenager with two little boys during the Depression. And Jerry Clower heard them tell his mama, "The only hope is for you to give the boys up. I think we can place them at French Camp Academy. They can be up there and be orphans."

Clower overheard that. But he also overheard his mama crying and saying, "I'm going to keep my boys with me."

Clower continues the story: I've seen her pick two rows of cotton (me and my brother trying to keep up picking one). I saw her working and knocking off about eleven thirty to go to the house and try to scrape up something to eat----something out of an old meal barrel.

Clower says, "My mama-----my mama is my number one hero."

My heart tells me Jesus is like Jerry Clower's mama. Jesus didn't let go of those disciples even though they all betrayed him. Jesus didn't forsake them or leave them as orphans. And this Easter I want to tell you with my heart that Jesus will not leave you or forsake you.

My heart-----my heart also yearns to be like those women in the Easter narrative, those women who got to deliver the great news to people who weren't dead but who were dying inside-----dying inside for some good news. I want to tell you----I want to tell you that in the midst of all that is wrong and not right in your world----I want to tell you who may be saturated with fear or drowning in disappointment or confused about the what the heck just happened in your life---I want to tell those of you who are unsure of perhaps even the next week of your existence-----I want to tell you who are dealing with the stench of death---I want to tell you like those women told the disciples that the love of God has not been and will never be extinguished from this world.-----I want to tell you, like the women told them, that the light has entered the darkness and even though the darkness is very dark, the light, this light is the light of the world.

When I put my brain in the footnote area and I let my heart loom large-----I see that light, and I also see those disciples, those scared, distraught, disappointed disciples gathered together in a room. And my heart wants me and you, when we are desperate for some light, when we are grasping for any shred of hope, my hearts wants me and you to have friends who will be with us in a room.

Those disciples in that stressful time could have been torn apart. But in their time of distress they were together, side by side, in that room. And I wouldn't have expected that. Not at all.

Their being together, at least from my perspective, is almost as big of a miracle as the tomb being empty of Jesus body.

Let me explain. We, incorrectly believe, that the 12 disciples liked each other, that they were, to use the cliché, birds of a feather flocking together, that they were chummy chummy, buddy buddy. They actually had major differences. You've got a group of fishermen matched with Matthew the tax collector, who collaborated with the Romans, and you've got Simon the Zealot who was an extremist who wanted to have nothing to do with the Romans or anyone who collaborated with the Romans. You've got Simon Peter with his wildly impetuous nature and-----and like I said, I wouldn't have expected them ever to be together in the first place, and I surely wouldn't have expected them to be together after the glue that held them together, the glue being Jesus---I surely wouldn't have expected them to be together after Calvary.

Have you found in your relationships that stress brings you closer to others or does it make your relationships even more difficult?

This Easter my heart yearns to be in a room, in a room like those 11 disciples gathered in. My heart yearns to be supported even by people who on their own would have never chosen to hang out with me, but who, because of Jesus, feel they can love me and care for me despite me being me.

They were together in a room, the narrative says, and----here's my favorite part. Jesus enters the room and do you remember what he says?-----He says----let's pretend Jesus was southern----Jesus says, "Y'all got anything I can eat? What's cooking? Got any of those biscuits and gravy leftover from the Wedgewood Easter breakfast?"

Which reminds me of one more Jerry Clower story.

Clower writes: My mama's divorce was a real problem, church folks mistreated her, ostracized her. Divorce was just like leprosy back then. But my daddy left us. She didn't ask him to leave. Yet some of the people in the church wouldn't even have anything to do with her because she was a divorced woman.

I remember when she married my stepdaddy, there was a neighbor who never went to church--a man who would be classified as "pretty tough"----who walked from his house and set a bushel of sweet potatoes on the front porch and said, "I hope y'all are happy. I'm digging my potatoes, and I don't have anything else to give you."

Jerry Clower observes: "I thought it was interesting that a man who never went to church would be one of the few who was nice to my mamma."

Easter. 2008. Y'all got anything I can eat?

It's Easter. What if-----what if the love of God can never be extinguished? -----What if the love of God enables us to love each other even though on our own we would never choose to be in the same room together?-----What if someone is asking us, Y'all got anything I can eat?

After you sing the hymn of invitation, and you listen to the announcements, benediction and postlude, yall can skedaddle.