

“Who Will Roll Away that Stone for Us?”

Mark 16:1-8

Sermon notes from the pulpit of
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There are problems that seem insurmountable. Sometimes the road ahead seems permanently blocked. Have you ever faced something that you just couldn't imagine getting around?

The teenager worries that she'll never fit it. You or I might think this is trivial. She's just a girl. Of course, she'll fit it. She probably already fits in and just doesn't know it. On the scale of world problems, we think, this is low on the list. But this young woman doesn't think so. It's not a small matter to her, nor does this feel like a temporary problem. She's asking us to take her seriously, because she doesn't see a way around it. She believes she'll never fit in.

This isn't a problem that plagues only teenagers, is it? Members affiliated with statewide Rotary clubs are being invited to a talk in Bloomington about “Imposters Syndrome,” which posits you're a fraud. No matter how successful you are on the outside, on the inside you are not worthy. Even in the face of successful achievements, you're not good enough. You don't measure up. Your internal critic puts you down all of the time, and you can't stand up for yourself even to yourself. You're standing in the way of yourself, and you don't see how you can get out of your way. And for some of us, it's a road block we can't get around.

Some 28-minutes into her voyage to Sri Lanka, The Dali, a container ship nearly 1,000-feet-long, struck and demolished the Francis Scott Key Bridge spanning the Patapsco River. Six highway workers are presumed dead. Our nation's 17th largest port, Baltimore, is shut down possibly for weeks. Interstate 695 one of the busiest roads on the East Coast is closed—*is gone*. The Maryland governor has declared a state of emergency.

Sometimes the road we are on completely disappears before us. Finding a new path takes a while to emerge. And for some, it feels like forever.

The road is blocked. Our path has been washed away. The problems seem insurmountable. When will the war in Ukraine end? Peace in the Middle East seems impossible. When are we getting our elevator? When am I ever going to fit it? How long, Oh Lord? How long?

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome are making their way to the tomb, and they are wondering and worrying, *How are we going to get into the tomb to prepare the body, in the first place? Who is going to roll that stone way*. A giant stone covering the tomb will be a problem. These women are worried about this road block.

So, it often is with us. We often worry about things that really aren't there. We get weighed down by things that won't happen.

But besides the stone covering the tomb, these women have other worries, too. Their friend is dead. *How will we get over this grief? How will we find our way into a new normal?* Jesus's death is like a big stone right in the middle of their narrow path. *How can we go on without our loved one? How can we continue our journey bearing the weight of this loss?*

These women and we know what it's like facing road blocks: *I'm under employed. I'll never get through grad school. Charlie Brown feels so bad about himself because Lucy keeps yanking the ball away before he has a chance to kick it. James Bond feels terrible because his girlfriends keep getting killed by evil spies. How*

are the dockworkers who work paycheck to paycheck in Baltimore going to make ends meet without steady work? We all know about what it's like to have a boulder in your path blocking the way.

The women wonder who will roll the stone away in order that they can get inside the tomb and prepare the body of Jesus. They're carrying the towels. They're carrying their sadness. They're carrying the heavy frankincense and the heavy myrrh, and even though it's early in the morning, they are bone tired. The world as they know it is over.

As it turns out, of course, there is no need to roll the stone out of the way. God already took care of that with the resurrection. And there's no need to grieve. God took care of that, too. Yes, Jesus is gone. But the man dressed in white tells the women that Jesus is only gone to Galilee. Meet him there. Tell the others. It was Frederick Buechner who wrote, "The resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing." Meet Jesus in Galilee. And on the way, tell the others.

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When that teenaged girl tells us she feels like she'll never fit in, maybe we should take her on a walk with her sisters, that trinity of women who went to the tomb very early on the first day of the week. Maybe we should remind ourselves how deeply tired and defeated those sisters felt. And yet, Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome got to the tomb and discovered that God had been busy. God had been at work. Resurrection reminds us that God can and does clear a path. God can roll away any stone. And you can't bury God's love and expect it to stay buried.

And there it is: God's amazing love. Resurrection reminds us that God's love can do anything, and the last thing that God wants for you is to feel like you'll never fit in. And I don't know how God does it, but God can, God does, God will.

The Lord is risen.
The Lord is risen, indeed.