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### ***An Easter Gift of Mark's Gospel***

The Gospel of Mark tells the Easter story in its own inimitable way – more sparing of words and explanations than the other Gospels. Even the closing of the Gospel is concise. Near the end of Mark's Gospel, for instance, we read that Jesus has been crucified and buried. But three days later, when the women go to the tomb to anoint his body, they find the body gone. Instead of a dead body, they see a figure dressed in dazzling white who tells them to go to Galilee, because Jesus has gone ahead and will meet them there. We aren't told why he's gone ahead to Galilee, or just what the significance of his return to that region means.

Why would Jesus go ahead of them to Galilee? True, Galilee was where they had first met Jesus, where they had first come to feel the power of God in their lives, and where they had first glimpsed the dawning of the kingdom of God among them. But Jesus' followers had left Galilee. When they left they believed they were following Jesus to a place where the kingdom of God would be realized and justice would flow like a river. And those dreams had been shattered with Jesus' crucifixion. To go back to Galilee now was to face disappointment, heartbreak and emptiness. Yet the Gospel of Mark says that Jesus' followers were instructed, nevertheless, to go back to Galilee, for it would be there that they could encounter the risen Christ.

As author Debra Bowman has said, we all have our own Galilees – not cities on a map, but landscapes in our souls. Our Galilees are places where hope turned to heartbreak, where joy turned to grief, where love became resentment, and life became death. Our Galilees are the places or experiences from which we flee and to which we have no desire to return. But the Easter message is that these are precisely where the risen Christ will be. These are where he is hoping for us to meet him. These are where new life is waiting to be discovered. These are where resurrection is sure to be revealed. Where the risen Christ goes, we are called to follow. And he's not going just anywhere, he is going ahead to Galilee.

Yes, the gift of Easter is to say that we can go back to those places of darkness, of grief, and of despair, but with hope and with faith. We can go back to the places where our hearts have been broken, and trust that Christ is there. And then, joy of joy, knowing that Christ's loving spirit is inextinguishable and inexhaustible, we can even move **forward** into situations that unnerve us or terrify us. Nothing has the power to overwhelm us when we know we've discovered the risen Christ.

Now, the Gospels may not thoroughly explain this mysterious truth to us. Surely Mark's Gospel doesn't spend time trying. It simply tells us to get up and go find the risen Christ – and rejoice! What a gift.