

# FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

## “HE IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU TO GALILEE”

Scripture Lesson: Mark 16: 1-8

*This sermon was preached by Dr. L. Holton Siegling, Jr. on Sunday, April 27, 2025  
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

### Mark 16: 1-8

#### The Resurrection of Jesus

1 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 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.” 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

#### He Is Going Ahead of You to Galilee

Leader: The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

As I made my way to last week's Easter Sunrise service at the Battery, I noticed something special — almost sacred — about my short walk down Meeting Street. The city, usually humming with tourists and the sound of horses' metal horseshoes hitting the ground, was quiet. The closer I got to White Point Garden, the more I could hear birds in the trees. Just as I arrived, the first rays of light began casting long shadows across those familiar walking paths.

It struck me that the world looked the same — and yet, it didn't. It was a new day, for sure, a day that had never existed before, and it would never exist again exactly as it was at that moment. That's something like the paradox of Easter morning, isn't it? The world appears unchanged — and yet everything is different.

This morning, Mark's Gospel invites us into that mysterious, in-between space. The sun has risen, and three women — Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome — are on their way to the tomb with spices in hand. They are not expecting a miracle. They're expecting a corpse. They plan to anoint a lifeless body. Their most pressing concern is logistical, not theological: “Who will roll away the stone for us?”

But when they arrive, everything changes. The stone is already rolled away, and instead of silence and sorrow, there's a young man — an angel — sitting inside with words they never expected to hear: “You are

looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; He is not here. Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee."

This is the turning point of the story for those women. Jesus was not in the tomb. He wasn't even there to greet them. He's already moving forward and calling them to meet him in Galilee.

Now, if we were writing this story, we might imagine a different post-resurrection strategy. Wouldn't it be something to see Jesus return to Jerusalem in triumph? To walk into the temple, turn to Pilate and Caiaphas and say, "Remember me?" It could have been the vindication parade of all time. Jesus could have taken that same road he rode in on Palm Sunday — but this time, not on a donkey, but on a cloud of glory, surrounded by angels, with trumpets sounding and banners flying.

But he doesn't. He doesn't even stay in Jerusalem. He doesn't seek revenge or revel in victory. Instead, he goes to Galilee.

Now, why Galilee? Galilee was not the center of religious or political power. It wasn't Jerusalem. It wasn't Rome. It was just life — fishermen and farmers, merchants and mothers. Galilee was home. It's where Jesus began his ministry, called his disciples, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and told stories that turned the world upside down.

In short, Galilee is where the ordinary happened — but it is also where extraordinary grace is revealed. And that, I think, is the point. Jesus goes ahead of them, not back to a temple or a throne, but to Galilee. Because that's where his people are. That's where the Church will be born — in community. And that sounds like where we are, too.

Friends, we don't gather this morning in a place of pomp or pretense. We gather here at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church — established in 1731 by faithful Scottish residents — not because it's perfect, but because it's where people have always come to meet the risen Christ: in Word and Sacrament, in mission and service.

This congregation has withstood wars, hurricanes, yellow fever, and more church meetings than we can count — and yet here we are, not because of any grand vision of our own, but precisely because Jesus still goes ahead of us, even into the life of the church.

Today, we are celebrating (or celebrated) the baptism of Olive Marko. We also have (or had) a congregational meeting, during which we will elect (or elected) a new class of Elders and Deacons and at-large Nominating Committee members. These acts might not seem like the stuff of miracles — but they are. Are they not such Galilee moments?

John Calvin, the great Reformer, once said, "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."

In other words, the risen Christ is here, in this very sanctuary — maybe not in a pillar of fire, but in a baby's cry. In the willingness to serve if called upon, and the affirmation of that call. In the hymns sung — sometimes off-key — and the prayers whispered in hope. Jesus is still going ahead of us, into this day and every day.

And this matters theologically. The angel said, "He has been raised." That's a passive voice, indicating that Jesus didn't just get up on his own — he was raised.

This is not inconsistent with what Jesus says elsewhere: "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again." In Romans, the Apostle Paul writes, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you..." This implies that the Spirit was also at work in the resurrection.

What I'm trying to say is that throughout the Bible, we see the resurrection as the work of the Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is God who breaks the power of sin and death, fulfills all righteousness, and pours forth grace.

This isn't just about beating death like it's the final level in a video game. This is about a God who did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Being fully human, Jesus bore our sins. Being fully divine, Jesus fulfilled our salvation. And God, the three-in-one, raised him in glory — not so Jesus could stick around in a garden, but so he could go ahead of us into Galilee and beyond.

And here's another redemptive detail: "Tell the disciples — and Peter." Peter was the one who had denied Jesus three times. He had run away in fear. But notice that Jesus doesn't wait for Peter to come groveling back. Jesus names him. Praise be to God, resurrection restores what has been broken. It's not just about defeating death; it's about restoring life.

And the good news is that God doesn't wait for us to get it right either. In fact, God is already out there — and in here — drawing us forward in faith.

Too often we treat Easter as a one-day event. The lilies and the hydrangeas are picked up, the Hallelujah Chorus fades, and we go back to normal. But Easter doesn't end with the empty tomb — it begins there.

Christ is risen, not to stay behind, but to go ahead of us. To Galilee. To Meeting Street and Calhoun Street. To classrooms and Zoom rooms. To hospitals, kitchens, softball fields, and PTA meetings. He is ahead of us — waiting to be seen.

Think about it: the same Jesus who turned water into wine, calmed storms, and healed the sick is still meeting us in our daily lives.

When the women arrived at the tomb, they were afraid — who wouldn't be? The resurrection is terrifying in its implications; nothing will ever be the same. Yet, they were entrusted with the most important message the world has ever heard — and so have we.

So let us not look for Jesus in the tombs of the past. Let us not linger too long in what was. Let us go and follow. Let us step forward in faith, because the resurrection isn't just about what happened in the past — it's about what is happening now. It is about the work that God continues to do in the neighborhoods in which we live, in the work we do, in the messy situations we find ourselves in, and in the relationships we are trying to heal.

To God be the glory that Jesus, risen and ascended, does not leave us or forsake us, but promises to be with us — promises to go ahead of us to Galilee. Which means that here and there and everywhere... Jesus will meet us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.