

"Living the Life: No End in Sight!"
Mark 16:1-8

In a lot of fairy tales, there is a common theme of a true love's kiss that brings someone back to full life. Think of Snow White, the Princess and the Frog, and Sleeping Beauty as examples of such stories. In recent children's movies, there has been a variation on the same theme of true love's kiss with Princess Anna reviving her sister with a kiss. One clip that I would like to share such as you is from Shrek where Princess Fiona is rescued by Shrek, the Ogre, and was expecting to be kissed by her savior. Let's watch the clip.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=true+love%27s+kiss+Fiona&&view=detail&mid=4C224BDCB9098BF5E4534C224BDCB9098BF5E453&&FORM=VRDGAR>

At first blush one might think that a kiss can't truly bring healing or new life to someone who has been in a coma for a long time. Thus, we often dismiss such stories as a work of fantasy. But if we look more deeply into the heart of such a symbol, we know that this simple message about the power of true love is so true in our world and in our lives. That is what Easter is all about. It is not a fairy tale about an impossible or supernatural occurring. It is about the power of love to overcome evil and death. On Easter morning, we proclaim that love wins and brings us back from the dead. It redeems and transforms whatever seems hopeless, diseased, or impossible in our lives.

If you think that this is just a simplistic kind of mindset or a fairy tale, take the evidence from science. In 2014, neuroscientist James Fallon wrote a book by the title *The Psychopath Inside* about his disturbing discovery that he had all the genetic markers of the brain of a psychopath. In 2006, while doing brain imaging studies, he used himself and his family as part of his research and to his horror and shock, he noticed that he had the brain imaging pattern and genetic makeup of a full-blown psychopath. He went into denial of his findings until 2010 when he decided to take the results seriously. He started asking questions about himself and did more tests on himself which confirmed that he had the tendencies and markers of a psychopath. As Fallon went on this disturbing journey of self-discovery, he wondered why "in the light of the fact I have all of the biological markers for psychopathy, including a turned off limbic system, the high risk genetic alleles, and the attendant behaviors, including well over half of those listed in the psychopathy tests and low emotional empathy, did I turn out to be a successful professor and family man?" In answering this question, Fallon says, "One most likely reason is that although I have the genetic makeup of a 'born' psychopath, some of those very same 'risk' genes in someone showered with love (versus abuse or abandonment), from childbirth through the critical first few years of life, appear to offset the psychopathy-inducing effects of the other 'risk' genes. This is why I tell my 97-year-old mother that the book I wrote about a young boy who could have turned out to be quite a danger to society is just about someone who will do anything to beat you in a game of Scrabble or follow you into a deadly cave. She still doesn't realize that the book is not about me, it is about her."

So, the answer which Fallon discovered was love. What prevented him from turning out to be a danger to society was love and nurture. Love changes everything. The ending of the story of our lives can be like those of fairy tales if we use love as our essential tool for life.

I think this is the message which the Gospel of Mark leaves us with for the ending of the story of Jesus and his life here on earth. We are left with a choice of how to end the story. This Gospel story ends abruptly. (Read Mark 16:1-8 for first service) We don't seem to have a real ending. It just leaves us hanging to imagine all kinds of possibilities. Mark gives no accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, and the women fail to tell the others that he has been raised and simply flee in terror. End of story. The longer ending of verses 9-20 was added much later. Scholars believe that the early church added this ending later because the other ending was too unsettling. So, if we don't try to dismiss the shorter and more abrupt ending of the Gospel of Mark, what can we make of it? Why such an open-ended ending? We would prefer a more solid ending! But the problem is the work of Jesus' ministry is not done and it needed to be continued. And the people who followed after the first disciples needed to be invited into the story. Just like them, we are invited to enter into the story of Jesus and to see that Easter is not the end but the beginning of our story. Love triumphed over death and evil and we are invited to practice resurrection each and every day of our lives. Living the life God calls us to live is about continuing to focus on the power of love to bring healing and wholeness into our lives and into our world.

So how do you join this story of love today? The choice is ever before us to let the story end with just the Gospel and the people before us or we can enter it and practice each day acts of love believing that love overcomes and heals all the brokenness and fear of our world.

In his book *The Easter People*, Robert Berringer writes, "I can still recall a geography lesson from elementary school in which we learned that the southernmost point of Africa is a point which for centuries has experienced tremendous storms. For many years no one even knew what lay beyond that cape, for no ship attempting to round that point had ever returned to tell the tale. Among the ancients it was known as the "Cape of Storms," and for good reason. But then a Portuguese explorer in the sixteenth century, Vasco Da Gama, successfully sailed around that very point and found beyond the wild raging storms, a great calm sea, and beyond that, the shores of India. The name of that cape was changed from the Cape of Storms to the Cape of Good Hope." This is the invitation of Easter. The courage to love changes everything and invites us to live each day anchored in love knowing that love never ends! Amen.