

On Tuesday I saw the film “I Can Only Imagine,” the true story of Evangelical singer, songwriter Bart Millard. I must confess I’d never heard of Bart Millard before. (I have to get out more.) But a seminary classmate recommended the movie, so I went – and I liked it. Go see it. The point I took away from the movie was the reconciliation of Bart and his dad. Bart’s father had been physically abusive to him as a kid. Had put him down: made him feel worthless, driven his mother out of the marriage. The film tells the story of Bart trying to forgive his father and his Father trying to open himself up to God’s forgiveness – and his son’s. Bart couldn’t sing authentically until he dealt with his past hurts. And Bart’s father couldn’t die at peace until he had been forgiven.

To simplify the plot, Bart had left home for good to follow his dream of being a musician, but he returned home after failing to get the career break he was counting on. When Bart comes home he finds his father seemingly a changed man, trying to connect with his son. I won’t reveal much more, but it turns out the Father had secretly been

listening to the radio when Bart, who was an excellent singer, had been singing at a local church, and continued to listen even after his songs were over – to the sermon. There he heard the great story of Jesus. He had heard that God could do anything – even forgive him. Could that be true?

“They saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large.”

This Easter I want to preach on that verse, Mark 16:4. On that first Easter morning Mary Magdalene, Mary, the Mother of James, and Salome come to the tomb of Christ, driven by faith and love of Jesus, unsure about how they would accomplish what they want to do --- anoint the body of their beloved Master – because of that large rock.

On this Easter morning, some 2,000 years later, we should remember those women. We too are Disciples of Christ. There are things we also want to accomplish in our lives, things we feel sure are according to God’s plan. But we don’t know how we can do them. The rock, whatever blocks us, is so very big. We can’t hope to move it.

I don't know what that very large stone in your life is, but we all have them. Maybe it is forgiveness of yourself or another. Maybe it's a health or money problem, or a family problem, or a job or a faith problem, but it's something that's been weighing us down for a while. And we don't see any way out or around it. We're stuck. We can't remove it ourselves as much as we try. And the sad thing is that, deep down, we really don't think Jesus can do it either.

Like Bart's father listening to his radio, during our Rerouting parish mission we've been hearing the Great Story about God and us human beings -- who we are meant to be and why. Today we jump to the ending of the story. The Easter message for you, and for all of us, is . . . Jesus can take away that rock of ours no matter how big it is. Bart's father heard the story of Jesus and His promise of new life. It was his one hope – and it brought him peace and the love of a son whom he thought he had deservedly lost forever. But the Resurrection of Christ is proof that, when Jesus is involved, there is no rock too big for Him. Not

even death could defeat Jesus. If God wants it moved, the rock will be moved, no matter how immobile it seems to our human eyes.

I don't know exactly how Jesus will remove your rock. It may take a different form than you expect, but the more I know Jesus the more I'm convinced that our biggest faith problem is that we don't trust how much Jesus can, and will, do if we let Him. Instead, we try to do it ourselves – and fail. At most we look to Jesus for assistance. It's like we let Jesus hold our tools, and hand them to us when we ask for them, maybe give us a word or two of advice, while we're trying to fix whatever's wrong in our lives!

But look at the holy women. On Easter morning they surely hadn't forgotten the huge rock that was there. With their own eyes they had seen it rolled over the entrance to the tomb on Friday. There was no way they could move it and they knew it. Yes, they were unsure what would happen, but they still came in faith to the garden all the same, not knowing how God would provide, but trusting that He would.

A life of faith requires of us that same trust in the risen Christ: greater trust, frankly, than we possess right now. But Easter is the day when we're called to grow in that trust by new prayer to the Victor over sin and death. On Christmas we feel the sweet joy in the Christ-child. But Easter is the feast of His, and our, triumph. It is the celebration of Christ the Conqueror. Easter calls for confidence and boldness in Jesus. We've denied Him with Peter for long enough. We've betrayed Him with Judas often enough. But today we're called to trust – and be bold in our trust. If we can only let go of our earthly calculations, and turn control over to this Risen Lord, great and amazing things can happen. Let us pray today in His name, and keep on praying, with boldness over whatever rock blocks our way, "Jesus, you defeated death for me. You died for me. You can do anything for me. Jesus, increase my faith in you. Roll away my rock, too."