

Daily Discipleship

Easter (B) – Mark 16:1-8

The Path of Discipleship: *Beyond the Grave*

Focus Question: *What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for those who follow as disciples?*

word of life

“He (Jesus) has been raised; he is not here.” Mark 16:6b (NRSV)

Read Mark 16:1-8

The account of the day of Jesus’ resurrection in Mark’s Gospel at first reading seems incomplete and leaves the reader unsatisfied, wanting more. There is no resurrection appearance, no earthquake to explain the movement of the stone at the tomb’s entrance, no conversation between Mary and the risen Christ, no disciples running to see the empty tomb. Perhaps most troubling, there is no telling of the good news of the resurrection to anyone. The Gospel ends (originally) with the women leaving the tomb saying nothing to anyone, “for they were afraid.” (Mark 16:8 NRSV)

1. *What is your reaction to Mark’s resurrection account?*
2. *Why do you think it ends this way?*

Obviously the early church was troubled by this ending as well. Later manuscripts added other endings which “tidy things up” with “the rest of the story” – the women telling others and the risen Christ appearing to his disciples. (See Mark 16:8b, and 16:9-18.)

3. *What message do you think the Gospel writer of Mark is trying to convey?*

Perhaps this abrupt ending is consistent with Mark’s style of writing – short, terse, just the facts. But perhaps there are other meanings to consider:

+ The resurrection of Jesus is understood and accepted only by faith. There is no appearance of the resurrected Christ, no empty burial shroud – simply the message, “He has been raised; he is not here.” (Mark 16:6 NRSV) The mystery of the resurrection is not solved with eyewitness accounts. Rather, it is left to the hearer to decide whether the words are true. The common, scientific phrase is reversed: “Believing is seeing.”

+ Similarly, it is left to the hearer to complete the story. Obviously, the women tell the story to someone, for the story is told by Jesus’ disciples today. Yet the abrupt ending can be a wonderful reminder of our calling to “go and tell.” We can easily be filled with awe at the profound news of the resurrection and fail to share the story with others. Yet the commission of the angelic messenger at the tomb is spoken to disciples of every time and place, “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.” (Mark 16:7 NRSV)

+ “Tell his disciples **and Peter** that he is going ahead of you.” It is Peter who boldly confesses Jesus as the Messiah, yet who denies him three times. It is the same Peter who is individually named to hear the news of the resurrection. The resurrected Christ brings forgiveness and new beginnings. The resurrected Christ goes before the disciples of every age and meets us in our everyday world and in our everyday places.

4. *How does Mark’s account motivate you to share the good news?*

word among us

Sometimes one little word can make all the difference. Take a moment to answer the following question:

1. *What one word would you use to describe the meaning of Easter Sunday?*

No doubt many wonderful, grand words come to mind. But think instead of a simple, three-letter word which peppers the Easter story in Mark's gospel: the word "**but**." The word is scattered throughout the eight verses of Mark 16 in strategic places.

2. *Look through Mark 16:1-8 to see where the word is found.*

The women are frightened, **but** the angelic messenger calms their fears. They have come to find the body of Jesus, **but** they hear instead the incredible news that he is risen. They are awestruck, filled with terror and amazement, yet they are told, "**But** go, tell"

Yes, one little word can change everything. It seemed that the story had come to an end. Jesus died a cruel death on the cross. It was finished. The women come to the tomb to do the last act of devotion – to anoint the lifeless body of Jesus for burial. They feel powerless, unable to stop death, unable to move away the large stone entombing their Lord.

But (There it is again!) **But** the stone is rolled away. **But** Jesus is not there. **But** Christ is risen!

3. *Think of the significance of that one little word in your daily life. Share examples.*

Pain and difficulties can weigh us down like a cold stone that cannot be budged. Death and sorrow can cover us as a shroud. Guilt and anxiety, fear of the future, or frustration over the past can entomb us, with seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel.

But God pulls off the greatest reversal of all in the resurrection of Christ. The last word spoken is not death, **but** life; not sorrow, **but** joy; not guilt, **but** forgiveness. Old definitions of what can or cannot be no longer apply since God acted at Easter. God breaks down the locked doors of whatever it is that shuts us in, and God promises wonderful surprises through that little word.

4. *How do you experience the power of the resurrection in your life?*

But there is something more. This wonderful news is not just for us to keep to ourselves. The words are spoken to us on this Easter morning, "**But** go, tell" Tell the world the good news of Easter. Tell the world that death is not the final word, **but** life eternal is ours through Christ our Lord. Tell the world that God is not confined to one time and place, **but** Christ goes before us and meets us wherever we find ourselves to be.

Prayer

We praise you, God, for the promise of life that is ours in the resurrection of Jesus. Amen

Dig Deeper

Read the other Gospel accounts of the resurrection. (Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20)

last word

Greet someone this week
with the Easter message,
"Christ is risen!"



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Easter (B) Page 2 of 2