

SERMON

May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts please you, O Lord.

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Mark Gospel ends rather abruptly. What we read today is known as the short ending of Mark. This was likely the original ending. Nothing more.

Mark's conclusion is so stark that several alternate conclusions were later appended.

The women flee from the tomb astonished and afraid.

We're left to wonder what happens next. Nothing about any appearance of the risen Christ. No joyful proclamation that death does not have the last word. Almost like Mark left us in the middle of the story.

Mark leaves us wanting, with great anticipation, for a more complete story of the resurrection. One more like what we find in the other gospels. I don't know why Mark left off in what seems to be the middle of the story.

Maybe it's exactly where the story needed to end.

Mark ends the resurrection story in the right place for those who aren't sure about resurrection themselves. For those whose lives are in an awkward, unresolved limbo.

Mark leaves us, the reader, to fill in the rest of the story. We are left to remember Jesus' earlier words. We eventually realize that the women must have shared their experience eventually. No one could keep the story of the empty tomb to themselves.

Somehow the women's fear must have eventually become courage, but Mark leaves it up to us to wonder how.

Still, Mark's "ending" contains hope. We are in chaotic times of uncertainty and fear. Most of the time our lives are an awkward mix of fear unresolved and possibility. A place where resurrection is hinted at rather than completed. A place where the future is unknown and the path is hidden.

But we can still live the story of resurrection. We depend on Jesus' words, the church's testimony, and the intriguing possibility of new life in Christ.

Mark's gospel is a good companion for us, as we are in the middle of our life stories.

This is true for the church as well. We see declining membership, a lack of energy, and reduced resources, but this is not the end of our story.

This is the middle of our story.

There is strange comfort in the abrupt ending of Mark's gospel: "They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (16:8).

Sunday March 31, 2024 — **Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day, Year B**

There is not a body in Mark's resurrection account. No Jesus sightings. The only way the women learn of the good news is from the joyful announcement of a young man dressed in white robes who happens to be waiting at the empty tomb.

Yet, somehow, the good news of the resurrection has made its way through the generations to us. We know Christ is alive because we have been told.

This is God's doing.

Martin Luther puts it this way in his explanation to the second petition of the Lord's Prayer: "In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us" (ELW, p. 1163).

The story of the risen Jesus continues in the mission of the church, Christ's body. The possibility of resurrection draws us into a community that lives out the middle of its story in the hope and witness of Christ's new life.

Freed from carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders, we respond as people dependent on the risen Christ.

We are free to respond to God's call. Free to respond to the cry for help from our neighbor. Free to respond with a kind word to the stranger.

The Easter gospel as Mark tells it announces the empty tomb and promises that the women and the other disciples will see the risen Christ back at their home.

Let us keep Christ alive in our hearts and in our lives.

AMEN

NOTES AND FOOTNOTES

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43 (Gentiles hear the Good News)

The Gospel is preached regardless of boarder, or social boundary. / The message of peace was first proclaimed at Jesus' birth.¹ / .² / .³

Psalms: 118:1-2, 14-24 ()

"The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" Could this be the stone rolled away from the grave? / x .¹ / .² / .³

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (the Resurrection of Christ)

Paul writes to the church of Corinth about how he brought the good news to them, and they now believe that Christ died for their sins. He seems to get a little off course in v10 but recovers nicely by v11. / x .¹ / .² / .³

Gospel: Mark 16:1-8 (the Resurrection of Jesus)

Mary, Mary, & Salome bring spices to the tomb and find a young man in a white robe. The man tells them that Jesus is not there and to tell the disciples and Peter to meet Jesus in Galilee. They flee from the tomb in terror and amazement. / the young man should be recognized as an angel. .¹ / .² / .³

Sunday March 31, 2024 — **Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day, Year B**

WELCOME/GREETING

Christ Has Risen!

Happy Easter and Welcome to Gethsemane! We're so glad you're here.

Please note that we live stream the service. During communion the live streaming is paused to protect those not wishing to appear on camera. Children are able to use the front pew during the Children's Sermon to avoid being on camera.

I need **2 volunteers** for the offertory.

Christ is risen! Jesus is alive, and God has swallowed up death forever. With Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, we may feel astonished and confused, unsure of what to make of the empty tomb. But this is why we gather: to proclaim, witness, praise, and affirm the liberating reality of Christ's death and resurrection. In word and feast, we celebrate God's unending love, and depart to share this good news with all the world. Alleluia!

If you wish you may join me on the front porch as we burn the burdens we nailed to the Lenten Cross and release them to God who carries them for us.