

Mark 16:1-8

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.

Mark 16:1-8, 2015 Easter

What an abrupt ending to the Gospel story according to Mark.

If we go back to the very first verse of Mark's gospel we read,
"The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son
of God."

This ending is a stark contrast to the hope and joy that first verse
can instill in your hearts.

The women who followed Jesus were always faithful in every
expectation, had always done what needed to be done.

This morning after the Passover observance starts out no
differently.

The women go out to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body and as they
go they wonder how they will get into the tomb with that big
stone blocking the entrance,
only to discover it had already been moved.

They enter the tomb to discover a man there who is not Jesus.

They are alarmed, but the man in the tomb tells them the
Good News,
Jesus has been raised from the dead and sends them on
their way to tell the disciples.

This man in the tomb, an angel is the first to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' resurrection, and the women are expected to be the next.

But our gospel lesson says they told no one, and so for everyone but these few women the story ended with the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

About now we would all like to hear the ending in the other gospels with the sharing of the good news with the disciples as the women become the first evangelists,

and the disciples going out to the tomb to see for themselves,

the appearance stories that bring closure to the narrative and for the disciples,

and to calm our own hearts with the assurance that Jesus truly is risen from the dead.

But we are stuck with this ending, even though we know better.

We know it can't be true that the women told no one or we would not be here today.

The news had to get out somehow.

At this point in the Gospel of Mark there are two endings added on to the story.

The shorter version is only two verses long and simply says the women told the disciples and the disciples told the world.

The longer version goes into greater detail but essentially says the same thing.

They both contradict the last verse of our gospel lesson.

“...they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Where these other two endings came from no one is sure, but one thing is for sure.

Word got out. Someone had to tell.

The word had to get out or there would have been no point in any of what had taken place before;

Not only in the last couple of days, but in Jesus’ ministry and even in His birth. That we would have never heard about.

The Word had to get out!

John Wesley said.

“Here is the choice on this day: it can be that Jesus suffered and died and we remain silent. We can hand Jesus over to a memory of death...Jesus did not die for silence...He died for proclamation.

the proclamation of His resurrection!

He died so the story of His resurrection would be told and all people would have hope in the promises made by God,

and joy in the life given now and forever.

The women were told to go and tell the ones who did not know. The disciples later went to the four corners of the earth telling those who didn't know and that has been going on since the day of Jesus' resurrection.

It continues today because that is still our calling, to tell those who don't know.

When we fail to tell the ones who don't know about the resurrection of Jesus and what that means for the world

we leave Jesus in the tomb, dead and buried with the stone rolled in front of the entrance.

There is a story I have heard about a Dean at a seminary who discovered that one of the seniors who was supposed to graduate soon had not fulfilled his requirement to preach at least once before the student body at morning chapel.

He called the senior in and advised him that he had not preached as required and that he would be preaching at chapel the next morning.

The student went home and spent the entire night trying to come up with a sermon, but was unsuccessful.

In the morning he went to chapel and when it was time stepped into the pulpit. He looked out at his fellow students, the professors and the Dean who had gathered and asked,

“Do you know what I am going to say?”

The assembly responded, “No.” and he said, “Neither do I. Go in peace, serve the Lord.”

The Dean was shocked! He caught up with the student and said he wouldn't graduate unless he preached a real sermon the next morning.

So, again, at the end of the day this seminarian went home and spent most of the night trying to come up with a sermon, but again, was unsuccessful.

The next morning he stepped into the pulpit and looked out over the assembly, and the Dean, and asked,

“Do you know what I am going to say?” They kind of chuckled and responded, “Yes” this time,

and he said,

“Okay good, go in peace, serve the Lord.”

Again the dean was furious.

“That was unacceptable. I will give you one more chance to do this and if you don't you will not be graduating.”

So, the seminarian goes home and tries to figure out a sermon but it just wasn't happening. The words wouldn't come.

The next morning he stepped into the pulpit one more time, possibly for the last time.

He looked out over the student body. There were his classmates, and the Dean. Again he asked,

“Do you know what I am going to say?” Some said yes and others said no.

This seminarian then said,

“Okay, those of you who know, tell those who don’t. Go in peace, serve the Lord.”

The Dean came running up to him and excitedly said,

“Well done! That was the perfect sermon!”

That is exactly how the gospel is shared. That is the calling of all Jesus’ followers.

The ones who know tell the ones who don’t know!

Christ is risen!

That is the good news for us here today and every day.

That is the Good News we are to go and tell to all who don’t know!

Christ is risen!

Sin and death have been defeated,
the battle Christ fought for us is won,

You are children of God bound to Christ in love
and grace through your Holy Baptism.

You will live now and forever!

This is the good news for everyone, even those who don't know.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Amen