

The Book of Mark is most likely the first of the four gospel books to be written, sometime in the late 60s CE as those that knew Jesus personally were possibly dying and the Roman Empire invaded Israel and Jerusalem to put down their insurrection.

Today we reach the end of the gospel. It's a bit disappointing. After all the action, interaction, growing tension and climactic death of Jesus Mark chooses to end his story on a note of silence and fear. Not exactly the ending I prefer for a page turner! This story is perhaps well known, but this ending sure isn't. It's so disappointing that scholars, studying ancient manuscript copies, believe that the additional verses (see the back side of this sheet) were added as a more satisfying ending years later by scribes who copied down the story.

Mark seems to have carefully crafted the language of the story as he's written it down: playing with the titles of Jesus and what they represent in the First Testament (Messiah, Son of Man, Son of David). Mark has moved from those who have seen Jesus for who he truly is (from unclean spirits, to the marginalized – the blind, sick and women – and finally to the disciples and the crowds). The whole gospel is constructed as a movement towards Jerusalem, and now the women are told to go back to the backwaters of Galilee. Is Mark trying to say something by ending the story this way or did he run out of ink or inspiration? Or is he copying the Greek tragedy?

THE WOMEN: "Mark makes repeated references to "watching" women observing the death and burial of Jesus in Mark 15:40 & 47:

⁴⁰ There were also women *looking on from a distance*; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to *follow him and provided for (serve) him* when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem." And ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid."

"This vigil isn't rare as it was customary for charitable Jerusalem women to attend to the crucified. But Mark is quick to tell us that they women were not from Jerusalem, but were Galilean disciples of Jesus who Mark describes as model disciples who followed and served Jesus throughout his ministry up until the end, end in death (unlike the men who found such discipleship to be impossible). These three women are presented as an alternative to the three men of the inner circle of Jesus (Peter, James, and John): they are the true disciples.

This is the last, and, given the highly structured gender roles of the time, surely the most radical – example of Mark's narrative subversion of social orthodoxy and roles of the time. The world order is being overturned, from the highest political power to the deepest cultural patterns, and it begins within the new community around Jesus. It will be these women, the "last" become "first," who will be entrusted with the resurrection message. Yet curiously even here their portrait remains profoundly unromanticized and finally ambiguous. (note from Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*. pp. 396-7)

April 12, 2020
Easter Sunday

Mark 16:1-8

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ 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.

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK MOST SCHOLARS DO NOT BELIEVE THIS ENDING TO BE ORIGINAL OR WRITTEN BY MARK

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- What part of today's story grabs your attention?
- How do you find Mark's ending of the gospel story to be troubling, alarming, disappointing or not meeting your expectations?
- What does it lack?
- Why would Mark write it this way?
- How can one be both traumatized and filled with hope? What would that do to the women? ... to you?
- What invitation to walk, act, speak, or relate to others do you hear in the text today?

a young man, dressed in a white robe: Here we see many symbolic references. Is this young man is also the young man who... "was following Jesus in the garden, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. The soldiers caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked." Mark 14:48-52 ? *dressed in a white robe:* this brings to mind Jesus at the transfiguration, when it's revealed that he is God's Beloved Son "And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them." Mark 9:3
on the right side: this position points to repeated stories of discipleship such as the request of James and John "said to Jesus, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" - Mark 10:36-37 and the citation of the Psalms talking about the Messiah in Mark 12:36 " David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" When Jesus says that he is the Messiah when asked by the religious leaders "Jesus said, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'" (Mark 14:62) and finally with the bandits crucified with Jesus, "one on his right and one on his left" (Mark 15:27)

Verse 7 – Go...tell..you will see him in Galilee: Ched Myers says that this is the 3rd call to discipleship in the book of Mark each of which include the word "follow" and "after me" – the first is spoken by Jesus to the first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Mark 1:17) the second to the gathered crowd (including the disciples "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)

alarmed: in Greek (ἐξεθαμβήθησαν) this word is only used 2 other times in Mark. To describe the reaction of the crowd seeing Jesus after the transfiguration (Mark 9:15) and when Jesus struggles to come to terms with his own execution (Mark 14:33).

just as he told you: Some scholars see this phrase as a reference to the tradition of which Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 (and which was written before the gospel of Mark): "3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died." 1 Corinthians 15

terror and amazement: the words here can also be translated as "traumatized" and "ecstatic/filled with hope"

THEY SAID NOTHING TO ANYONE: Here at the end of the story is a striking reversal. Early in the gospel Jesus commands those he heals to be silent, not to tell anyone about what has happened (Mark 1:44 & 7:36) but they speak about it. Here the women are told to speak about it, but they remain silent.