

Sermon: 12 April 2009

The text for the sermon:

- ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”**
⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.¹

I like Mark’s version of the resurrection the most. Why? Because he tells it on such a human and realistic way that really touches one’s emotions. Mark is known as the oldest Gospel and it seems as if Luke and Matthew used Mark as a source. It is evident that Matthew and Luke added on where Mark stopped with his version of the resurrection. Mark is also the writer who does not worry too much about the Greek grammar. He tells it in the way he is accustomed to without polishing the text or refining it. It is obvious that Greek is his second language.

Well I know what it is like! And some things really go wrong in translations. And in the years to come I am sure we all are going to have a good laugh for everything I pronounce or say in a totally different way that you are used too.

Well Mark is no exception and it is also clear in this text for instance verse 2 where there is a lot of inaccuracy in the text. He says in the one breath two different things – early morning and just after sunrise! Usually “early morning” referred to the 2 to 3 hours before sunrise while later he would say “after sunrise”! I think he wanted to say very early in the morning most probably after sunrise because no people would take chances of walking in the dark especially the woman. Most probably he did not care of making himself clearer because in his mind he thought he was clear enough! What was important was the fact that it was the first day of the week the day after the Jewish Sabbath!

But let us begin at the beginning. Mark tells us how ordinary people mourned the death of a loved one – in this case Jesus. He tells us of three women who walked the journey with Jesus. They were the identifiable witnesses with names at the crucifixion, the burial, and now the empty tomb. They do not spare money to buy expensive spices to anoint a body that was dead for at least a day and a half. It seems clear however that they were very emotional and was not thinking rationally because in that hot climate it was inconceivable to anoint a body which decomposed almost immediately due to the heat. But they wanted to say farewell to Jesus and did not worry too much about anything else. They waited for the Jewish Sabbath to end before they could come to the grave. They came as soon as they could without thinking about anything else.

This becomes even more apparent when they realized on their way to the grave that there is no way they could get into the grave since there was a huge stone at the entrance. When you

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Mk 16:7-8

are emotional you do not think straight! Your feelings for the loved deceased over shadows all your thoughts! They just wanted to get to the grave in order to see their beloved Jesus. Mark also emphasizes the fact that they did not expect Jesus to be resurrected. Therefore the shock and the amazement and the fear when they arrived and saw the stone being rolled away and a young man with white clothes is sitting on the place where Jesus' body was supposed to lie. Mark does not tell us more about this man's identity – however he must have been an angel from God because he knew their inner feelings of being scares or troubled. He also seems to know exactly what they were doing there. He says to them that they are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. Jesus the Nazarene" is an important term for Mark which he used near the beginning of his Gospel and in 14:67 and here near the end. Mark wanted to say that Jesus was a real person who can be located in history and geography. Throughout his Gospel he does this. He also uses the "divine passive" so that "has risen" means *God raised him*. The "place where they laid him" was a shelf or niche carved in soft rock. Usually there would be several of these around a larger space where one could stand.

In all the Gospels the women were the first witnesses. It is quite remarkable that they became the witnesses because in their society the testimony of women were not accepted in Jewish courts. But again throughout the Gospel it is evident that everyone is in faith part of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, even women!

Then the young man commands them to go and tell the news of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples and Peter. In a sense Mark brings this event in connection with what Jesus previously promised his disciples in chapter 14:28. He will do exactly what He previously said to meet them at Galilee.

Then Mark ends his Gospel abruptly with the women who do not obey the commands of the young man. Mark says they were so bewildered that they just fled like the disciples who fled from the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. They were so scared that they told no one what they had heard and seen.

Many researches argued that this cannot be the end of the Markan Gospel. However the oldest manuscripts confirm that this is really the end of the Gospel. In a way it seems fitting because Mark started his account of JESUS also on a very abrupt way unlike Luke and Matthew. Mark is also the Gospel who has the theme of a messianic secret which links well with this open end. It is open end where he challenges his readers/hearers to continue the story in their own lives. He challenges you and me to carry this message forward wherever we go. He challenges us to take this journey with Jesus further. It did not stop at a graveside. It was just the beginning...

And while we talk of new beginnings this is the day to start again. We must all get out of our caves of comfort and luxury and start traveling with God. We must accept this journey of faith with hope and endure the hardships that come with our faith in Jesus. Yes there will be times where our crosses will feel heavy but God promised us it will never be too heavy...

There will be times where we will want to stop traveling with God because there are easier options. But He promised that He will help us when we are tired. There will be times where we

are so mad with God that we want to ignore him as far as possible. But God is always there. There will be times when we are so sad that we struggle to speak to Him. There will be times of doubt and despair...

But we must always remember what happened a long time ago. God revealed himself in Jesus Christ and gave us his Holy Spirit to help and guide us through the good and bad times. We must take God's hand and trust him in everything we do and say. Easter is about faith and our priorities. The women went to the grave in faith to find Jesus. They found in the end so much more. Let us all go in faith to the empty tomb as often as we can. It will help us to stay focused on our real mission and responsibilities in this world as followers of God. We cannot afford to miss one opportunity to tell the world: Jesus is raised!

May we live this message in everything we do, say and think as we travel with God!!

Amen

.....

Readings for the week
Taken from www.rootsontheweb.com

Mark 16.1-8

Mark 16 is as interesting for what it does not say as for what it does say. It describes the appearance of an angel but not that of Jesus himself. When we set Mark alongside Paul, Paul has no description of the empty tomb and Mark has no description of the resurrection appearances. Indeed, Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, does not put into anyone's mouth a need for a belief in an empty tomb, it is the appearances of the risen Christ which are the evidence they present.

In fact we must read both narratives in the light of each other. The empty tomb, as described in the Gospel, is an unambiguous symbol which finds its meaning when read alongside the resurrection appearances. The resurrection appearances gain their definitive meaning from the description of the empty tomb. As faithful believers we can have the hope of everlasting life. The tomb is empty and we can rejoice! God made a new future possible for everyone that believes in the redemption of Christ.

Other readings:

Isaiah 25.6-9, Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24, Acts 10.34-43