

Growing Deeper in Mark

MARK 16.1-20

VERSES 1-3: Mary, Mary, and Salome rise early on the first day of the week to properly bury their beloved Jesus. In the haste to place the body in the tomb before the Sabbath began, it had not been properly prepared and wrapped. The thing that stands out about these women is their commitment to do the right thing, even though they had no idea how they might accomplish it. They discussed along the way, "Who will roll the stone away?" Have you ever allowed seemingly insurmountable obstacles keep you from doing what you knew was the right thing? Are you using that excuse now? Be like these women and move forward in faith giving God the opportunity to provide!

VERSES 4-5: These faithful women find that the thing they were worried about was really no problem at all. Now they are alarmed about who has disturbed this sacred sight. They enter the tomb and see what appears to be a young man dressed in a white robe. Their tenaciousness is about to be rewarded!

VERSE 6: As is so often the case, the angel entreats them not to be alarmed. The angel knows their business, "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified." Their heads must be spinning by now. Fear, outrage, hope, bewilderment, sorrow, curiosity all must have been racing through their bodies. I imagine it would have been hard for them to hear the amazing proclamation, "He is risen!" Could the truth of the statement really sink in? The angel goes on to try to ground his statement in the things they can see. "He is not here." Something has certainly happened to the body. Did their minds race back to the raising of Lazarus who had been entombed for four days? Or was that too much to believe? "See the place where they laid him?" In the other gospel accounts, we are told the graveclothes are still there, but not the body. How could this be? Who would steal the body but not the graveclothes?

VERSE 7: But before the women have any time to try and process all they are seeing and thinking and feeling, the angel gives them a command. They are to take a message to Peter and the other disciples that they are to go to Galilee where Jesus will meet them just as he had told them (Mark 14.28). They are the first ones commanded to take the good news of the resurrection to someone else. Thank God for faithful women throughout the history of the church who have followed in their footsteps sharing the gospel message! (This is a good place for us all to be reminded that evangelism, sharing the good news, is not something that one has to be trained for or gifted in to practice. We are all called to tell of what the Lord has done for us; of what the Lord has done for all people.)

VERSE 8: These women struggled with this command. Was it really true? Will anyone believe us? What if we're wrong? Any of those questions sound like the doubts you have had about sharing your faith story with someone? It is challenging to know what Mark means. Do they really never tell anyone? That isn't the case, according to the other gospel accounts. Even this gospel contradicts the idea that they don't tell anyone. Verse 10 tells us that Mary Magdalene goes to tell the disciples.

VERSES 9-20: You may notice in your Bible that there is a footnote along with verses 9-20. These verses do not appear in the earliest manuscript, which lead to the assumption that they were not a part of the

original gospel that Mark wrote. That may very well be the case, and that can be a reason to leave this portion out of our discussion. However, the account is ancient and gained some acceptance in the church. Even if it was added by a later editor, there can be value in the teaching. There is much that is in harmony with the other gospel accounts. The reference to Jesus appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, for instance. The disciple reluctance to believe that Jesus was really alive, for another. And there is the account of the great commission and Jesus' ascension. The challenging verse is verse 18. The proclamation that those who spread the gospel will take up serpents and drink poison without any ill effect are hard to back up with other scripture. For my part, I think I can receive the teaching of verses 9-20 without much pause, knowing that God does not ask me to be foolish, but also asks me to go out boldly and without fear for this fleeting life. May we all not shrink back from the call to make disciple of all peoples.