

# *The Beginning of the Good News*

## A Study of the Gospel of Mark

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas  
Fall 2015

### *"He is Going Ahead of You": Mark 16:1-8*

Some things to think about...

#### **What Kind of Ending is This?**

These eight verses are generally agreed to constitute the original ending of the Gospel of Mark, concluding with the provocative statement, "and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The conflicting themes of Jesus's powerful Messiahship and his suffering and death come together here in the shining forth of the young man's white robe against the bleak backdrop of the empty tomb, in the forcefulness of his command to tell and the women's terrified silence. Much of the Gospel of Mark is ironic and provocative, and the ending is especially so. Here the author almost seems to reach out and grab the reader or hearer: "What are you going to do about it? Will you tell? Will you be a faithful disciple? Do you have the courage?"

#### **Resurrection**

There are no actual stories of the risen Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, only the proclamation that "he is going ahead of you to Galilee." Think back over the stories of Galilee in Mark. Galilee was the setting for most of Jesus' ministry. There he healed, fed, exorcised powers of destruction, listened, challenged, comforted, criticized. There, too, he called his disciples and empowered them to carry out the same ministry that he was engaged in. The Gospel challenges you also to find the risen Lord. The question is: where will *you* look for him?

#### **A Circle**

Part of what the promise of seeing Jesus in Galilee entails is that the hearers of the Gospel go back to the beginning and tell the stories all over again, from Galilee to Jerusalem, from Baptism to empty tomb. Mark's community - the people who maintained these particular stories of Jesus, and who learned to tell them in this particular way - knew their Gospel by heart. They carried it with them wherever they were. In this way, they could pass on the Good News to anyone who asked. Their witness challenges us to memorize at least a portion of the Gospel, just to have a sense for what it felt like to make room for the Gospel in one's heart and mind, to hold it in the body. Perhaps you would like to choose at least a passage of Mark to memorize.

Attending to the Word...

This short but weighty account of the empty tomb calls for the hearer to identify with the characters, but also to react differently than they do.

Imagine that you are among the women who go to the tomb. What is your emotional state? What does that morning look like? Feel like? Smell like? How do you react to each turn in the story? What does it mean to you when you discover that the tomb is empty? What are you afraid of? What makes you finally decide to tell Peter and the other disciples?

Notice that in 16:5 the women are met by a “young man” dressed in a white robe (not “an angel of the Lord,” as in Matthew 28:2). Do you remember a time in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus was seen in dazzling white? What does white clothing seem to signify? The young man’s garments contrast with the otherwise dark setting of the tomb. What does this contrast contribute to the plot of the Gospel?

Now imagine that you are Peter and the other disciples who (eventually) receive the message from the women. What do you think? What do you do?

What does this account tell us about being a disciple of the *risen* Jesus? How is that different from discipleship in the rest of the Gospel? How is it similar?

#### Making the Word your own...

The women worry about not being able to roll away the heavy stone, shaped like a disk, that rolled in specially cut grooves to close the entry to a rock-cut tomb. But the stone turns out not to be a problem. What *is* the problem? In your own life, is there a difference between the things you worry about and the things that God would like to draw your attention to?

What is it about Jesus that cannot be killed?

Can you tell a story about a time when you felt that Christ had gone ahead of you into some situation? How did that feeling change the way you acted?

If you are doing this study in a group, you might consider choosing passages that each of you will memorize, and then proclaim them to one another. If possible, be sure to stand up when you proclaim your passage, so that you can use your whole body in speaking. If you do this, consider discussing what you hear differently in the stories when they are proclaimed in this way. How does this practice help the Gospel to come alive for you?

What are your main take-ways from this study of the Gospel of Mark? With whom did you find yourself most identifying as you read? What did you learn about Jesus? In particular, what does this Gospel ask of you as a disciple of Jesus? What do you want to do, to be, or to become, on account of having studied this Gospel closely?