

The Beauty of Easter

Mark 16:1—8

Introduction

This doesn't seem like a very positive ending to the Gospel lesson for the Resurrection of Our Lord. Evidently, early on, there was a scribe who felt the same way. Most modern translations have **verses 9—20** that tell the Easter story more in line with what we're used to with the other Gospel writers. That passage tells how Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, but the others didn't believe her. Then, He appeared to two disciples walking out in the country, but the others didn't believe them. Then, Jesus appeared to all eleven together and rebuked them for their unbelief and gave the Great Commission. Finally, Jesus ascended to the Father and the disciples preached the Word everywhere.

Not Mark's Gospel

There are four reasons most scholars agree that Mark's original Gospel ended with **verse 8**. 1) The first is the earliest manuscripts end with **verse 8**. 2) These last verses are not written in Mark's style. 3) It's a clumsy fit. 4) These last twelve verses read like a summary of five other Gospel narratives.

Mark's "Dark" Gospel

The truth is, Mark's Gospel is sometimes referred to as a "dark" Gospel. How can Good News be dark? Mark's Gospel is fast-paced and urgent. He doesn't take time explaining things or setting the scene or developing plot lines. Words like "immediately" and "must" are used extensively throughout this book. But another characteristic is that the people on the inside don't get it, while outsiders do.

"That" Ending

With that in mind, **verse 8** fits in with Mark's themes: *And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone.* But we shouldn't mistake this for a lack of faith on the women's part.

Overwhelmed

They were afraid because trembling and astonishment had overtaken them. They were overwhelmed. But being overwhelmed doesn't necessarily mean there is a lack of faith. We can be overwhelmed when things seem too good to be true.

Too Good to Be True

The old saying is, “When something seems too good to be true, it usually is.” Many times, living by this maxim protects us from being taken by scam artists. Put yourself in their place. This Man you’ve known for three years and called Friend, Lord, and Master has been brutally killed before your eyes just three days ago. It doesn’t matter that He has predicted His death and resurrection. The deep feelings brought about by the shock of actually seeing it happen drive all rational thought from your mind. This is shown by the fact that you didn’t even think about the heavy stone in front of the tomb until you were already on your way to complete the embalming process that was hastily begun on Friday.

Blown Away

The situation is further complicated when you see the stone already rolled away from the tomb. In your grief, you expect the worst, and your fears are confirmed when you see the tomb is empty. The body is gone! How can you get closure now? Then you see a *young man dressed in a white robe* (as Mark describes the angel) *sitting on the right side* of Jesus’ resting place (**v. 5**). Should you believe your grief-stricken eyes? To top it off, he tells you that Jesus is alive and will meet you in Galilee (**v. 7**). Your system is now totally blown.

The Unvarnished Beauty

But the best part about Mark’s Easter narrative is that it lets the beauty of Easter shine through. What is Easter about, anyway? Of course, we know it’s not about a weird rabbit that lays colored eggs. But it’s also not about the disciples. It’s all about the resurrection of Jesus and what that means for all of us: forgiveness of all our sins, new life in Christ, our own resurrection assured, and eternal life with Him in glory. The Good News doesn’t depend on how people respond. That doesn’t make it any more or less Good. The Good News is:

Alleluia!

Christ is risen!

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
