

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing to you O God of Resurrection. Amen

"...and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

What?! Are you kidding me?! I don't know which is more shocking, that the women would leave the tomb and say nothing to anyone; or that Mark chooses to end his story of Jesus' life and ministry in such an abrupt manner.

It's like reading a book that someone tore the last several pages out of, leaving us without an ending.

In Mark's gospel, there is no neat and tidy, all wrapped up in a bow conclusion. Oh sure, there's an addendum, added by scholar's who couldn't stand to let the gospel end on such a challenging note, but it's pretty clear, from ancient texts, that THIS is where Mark ends his gospel – "and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid."

I suppose we shouldn't expect anything different from this gospel writer, the one who begins his writings with John the Baptist. No birth narrative, no angels or shepherds or inn-keepers, just right into the story of John and of Jesus' baptism.

Mark obviously doesn't believe in long drawn-out narratives. He's more of a "get to the point" kind of guy.

But still, "they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid."? What are we supposed to make of this? What are they so afraid of that they wouldn't or couldn't share their story?

Perhaps they are afraid they will be accused by the authorities of removing the body themselves and then making up the resurrection story as an attempted affirmation of Jesus' true identity.

Maybe they are afraid of looking like fools. Three women, deep in grief, insisting that Jesus' body is gone and that an angel told them to go to Galilee, where Jesus will be waiting. Ya, right!

Or maybe the experience is so profound, the presence of God so tangible, that they just don't know what to make of it or how to even speak of it. Maybe they need time to process it themselves, before they can begin to explain it to anyone else.

I think about the times when fear keeps us quiet. When speaking up, sharing our wisdom, our witness, seems impossible. Maybe we are afraid of looking smug, or looking stupid; maybe we fear retaliation or humiliation; or maybe a close encounter with the Holy has simply left us speechless.

There are, I think, any number of reasons that we don't speak up, we don't share the good news of Jesus, his ministry and his resurrection. I mean, what would we or the women for that matter, say, what can we say about resurrection?

"Well, we didn't actually see it happen, but there was this empty tomb and this angel, and sometimes they say that Jesus actually appears ... we don't know how, maybe for real, maybe as a ghost, ..."

I mean Come on! Really? In over 2000 years, have you ever, even once heard a theologian, or a preacher, even attempt to explain what happened, what resurrection looks like. Even the scriptures don't explain it. It just ... is. It just ... happened. It is ... of God and completely unexplainable!

So why would we expect the women to run off proclaiming "Hallelujah, He is Risen"? Why shouldn't they be afraid – of what has happened, of what they see, of what others may think.

So maybe Mark is just being real here. Maybe the women simply can't find the words to explain their experience.

Despite this hesitancy, we are as sure of Jesus resurrection as we are of his life and ministry. Yes, there are times when we, like the women, walk away and say nothing to anyone, but maybe that is Mark's point here.

Maybe in the silence of the women, the reader is invited to see and acknowledge their own silence. Maybe it isn't up to the women to share the news, at least, not just the women.

Mark chapter 1, verse 1 reads "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The beginning of the good news. It's not the whole story, it's not a complete accounting from beginning to end. It is only "the beginning".

And isn't that where the women (and the reader) are invited back to? Back to the beginning, back to Galilee, where it all started; back to where we first hear the call to follow; back to the teachings and the ministry that have impacted our lives and our living.

“Going back to Galilee means going back to the margins where Jesus ministered and encountering him again feeding the hungry, driving out the demons that torment people, preaching words of hope to the broken-hearted, healing those in distress, and breaking down the barrier walls that separate people.”ⁱ

Going back to Galilee, back to the beginning, invites us to remember and to realign ourselves with the gospel message, over and over again.

Mark’s concluding words are not, in fact, about missing the last few pages and leaving us without an ending. Rather, it’s more of a “first in a series”, reminding us that Jesus’ ministry, the gospel story, does not end on the cross, at the empty tomb or even in the silence of the women.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a never-ending story, one that encompasses the past, the present and the future. And this is only the beginning.

Because despite any initial concerns, word does get out, people do find their voices; words do become actions and God’s love outweighs all the fear.

May it be so for us, as well. May our faithful living, our prayerful speaking and our compassionate actions, keep the story alive, keep the faith alive, keep the passion for Christ and the hope of the kingdom alive.

In God’s resurrection power, may it be so. Amen

ⁱ Ruge-Jones, Philip. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/resurrection-of-our-lord-2/commentary-on-mark-161-8-6> April 1, 2021.

Lose, David, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/just-the-beginning-2> April 1, 2021.