
Easter Sunday, Mar 31 2024

Summary: This week, we celebrate Easter and wrap up our series on the Gospel of Mark. We look at the forces at play in Jesus's trial and crucifixion, the women who needed to find their voice to proclaim the good news, and the invitational, circular way the gospel of Mark is structured to help us discover Jesus and meet him in the places we already know.

Nightmare: Mark 14:62, Mark 15:14-15. The trial of Jesus shows us that we can do everything right and still end up in a nightmare. His singular life was a threat to both a religion and an empire. And this is another reminder that being human is hard, and there's no guarantee that we will be safe.

Low Places: Mark 15:37-38. Mark tells us that the curtain was torn in two. The word that Mark uses is "skid zo," meaning "tear" or "split." The first time Mark uses this word is in Mark 1:10 at the baptism of Jesus when the heaven is torn open, and the Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove. The torn sky and the torn curtain are about removing barriers we think exist between us and God. Jesus came to show us that God can absorb all our terror and that even death can become new life.

Back to the Beginning: Mark 16:1-7. A messenger in the tomb sends the three women to Galilee, where the story of Jesus began. Mark wants the readers, including us, to experience the story of Jesus as a never-ending story, and when you think you've come to an end, you can go back to the beginning and see hope.

Over to You: Mark 16:8. The original gospel of Mark is believed to end here. The women are encouraged to finally unveil the messianic secret; now is the time not to be quiet about Jesus but to speak. Yet, the women are afraid. However, at some point, they did overcome their fear and found their voice and the way to tell the resurrection story because we're all here today. And now, Mark turns it over to us. The resurrection finds us in the middle of our struggles, and in our humanity, and in our failure, saying that we can always try again.

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Connect: At the beginning of her message, Bobbi mentioned that none of us show up on Easter Sunday with everything in our lives completely perfect. What is some of the heaviness that you carry to the cross of Christ this week? What are some of the things or practices in your life right now, or especially around the Easter season, that point you toward the hope of resurrection?

Share: Share your thoughts on the interplay and the role of religious and political powers in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

What do you think about the role of the crowd in determining justice and requesting Barrabas to be released instead of Jesus?

How do this part of the story and similar patterns of injustice we see even today make you feel? What in this story confronts, moves, or challenges you the most?

Reflect: Bobbi pointed out to us that the Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus as a never-ending story that invites us to find new beginnings in endings. Could you think of a personal experience where an ending led to an unexpected new beginning in your life? Where did you see God in that resurrection story?

In Mark 15:33-39, we see the profound moments of Jesus' crucifixion, including the tearing of the temple curtain. Bobbi connected that moment to the moment of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:10. What do you think is the significance of that moment? How is it a personal encouragement to you?

Engage: Consider the impact of the women's silent fear and their eventual courage to speak of what they witnessed. How does their experience relate to your own experience of fear, silence and courage?

Mark 16:1-8 ends abruptly with the women's initial silence out of fear. Why do you think the Gospel of Mark ends this way, and how does this open-ended conclusion encourage you to find your own place (and your own voice) in the ongoing story of Jesus?

Take away: What are you taking away from this sermon or today's conversation? What are some of the things that you want to remember from this gospel?

Prayer from the sermon:

Loving God,

It's a lot to get to Easter

The highs and the lows

The sorrow and the exaltation

The abandonment and the ever-persistent friendship of God.

As we move into Eastertide

The 50-day season your church has carved explore our own discipleship

Won't you invite us into deeper devotion

Awe and mystery

And a trust that there is always more to faith

More grace

More peace

More beauty

More joy

More life

May we practice all of it.

World without end. Amen.