

Sunrise Service

Mark 16:1-8

Note: Our church has a tradition of going for a walk together before eating breakfast Easter morning. In 2008 we walked through our city cemetery with stops for each of the scenes.

Parts: Mary 1 (Magdalene), Mary 2 (mother of James), Salome, Young boy, Narrator, Reader

Overview: The group starts at the market (Saturday night), then walks to Mary's house (Sunday morning), then to the tomb. It follows the story of the three women portrayed at the end of Mark.

Scene 1 Passover evening

If that was our road to new life, we are as dead as he is

Location: Public market

Time: Saturday night. Passover is over.

Narrator: Join us at a Jerusalem spice market. Jesus was crucified yesterday. Today is the Sabbath. The sun has set, so the market has just opened.

Reader: (Mark 16:1) When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

Mary 1: He is dead. It is over.

Salome: I had so much respect for him.

Mary 2: It all made sense, but now it is ended. We need to get over it.

Salome: Really? Look, the man was brilliant. He made things make sense. He made things fit together – somehow within himself.

Mary 1: Let's say our farewell with spices.

Narrator: Take a moment to think on this. Jesus showed how your life, and your community's life could be changed - not entirely, but just enough so that it seemed totally upside down. Now, he was down in a tomb, killed as a criminal. By saying farewell in this way, the women were both remembering their connection with Jesus, and ending it.

Scene 2

Let's do the honorable thing. After all, Jesus was honorable.

Time: Early morning, next day

Location: At Mary's place, waking up.

Reader: (Mark 16:2) And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

Narrator: Join us as Mary, Mary and Salome wake up.

Mary 1: Good morning!

Mary 2: What's good about it; I cried almost all night.

Salome: Boy is it early, the sun is barely up.

Walk towards tomb.

Mary 1: Do you remember what the tomb is like? There is a 400-pound stone at the front of it?

Mary 2: I'm so mad at all of this I can probably push it myself.

Salome: Actually, you're so mad that you bought all those spices without even thinking that you couldn't use them. Just like us to do something impulsive, without planning it through.

Narrator: Impulsive maybe. Unlike the disciples, the women did not desert Jesus. Like the disciples, they were confused.

Scene 3

Check out this tomb!

Location: At the tomb

Reader: (Mark 16:4) When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

Mary: What in the world?

Young man: Good one!

Mary 2: What?

Young man: I mean, you saying "In the world". You thought Jesus left this world – you thought he was dead.

Salome: Who are you? What's happening?

Young man: Hey, don't be scared. Jesus was crucified, but he has been raised. He's not here! In fact, he is going to Galilee to be with all of you, so tell that to Peter and the disciples. You've got a job. It is up to you to tell the disciples. Make sure the word gets out. After all, this is what Jesus said would happen.

All Three Women:

Act amazed. Then act terrified.

Mary 1: I can't handle this!

Mary 2: What do you mean, tell Peter? I'm not saying anything to anybody!

Salome: I'm outta here!

Reader: (Mark 16:7-8) But go and tell his disciples that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you. So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Narrator: This is how the original version of the book of Mark ended. Ask yourself this: Had a single one of Jesus followers seen him alive yet? No! All they had is what we have – circumstantial evidence. A stone rolled away. An empty tomb. Someone else's word for it.

How could Mark end the story of Jesus the Messiah on a note of pure failure?

Let us consider that this may be pure brilliance, that it captures Mark's message perfectly. Jesus had predicted that the men would fail by deserting him. It was the women who had been faithful - up to now. But here, in the end, they failed too. The book deliberately ends with the failure of all. And yet we stand now in the future and know the movement did not die with Jesus. The women and the disciples must have gone to Galilee. They must have connected with Jesus. Something made this movement start moving!

The point, surely, is that the movement found its start through this group of failures. The Jesus way is open to all, especially those who have failed. It could even be said that failure is expected, as every single person abandoned Jesus. Therefore, who are we to pass judgment on others? And who are we to doubt that there is a new way through our own failures?

Our salvation, our redemption, our purpose, is found in the Jesus who rose and who welcomes us to join him and his movement anyways. He still calls us to join him in Galilee.

Prayer:

Lord of new beginnings,
we admit we too have failed.
By your grace we know
that we are still invited by the risen Christ
to meet him on our journey.
Be with each of us as we move forward
from failure to your new world. Amen.

Hymn:

Hymnal Worship Book 614 In the Bulb, There is a Flower

Wayne Plenert (Canada), 2008. Northgate Mennonite Brethren Church.
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