

The Resurrection of Our Lord

RUNNING INTO JESUS

Mark 16:1-8

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Analysis by Steven C. Kuhl

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. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb? 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 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.

DIAGNOSIS: Desperately Fleeing Death...

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Who will roll away the stone for us?*

As the women first approach the tomb of Jesus, Mark's description of them is starkly stoic. Having no expectations other than the finality of death (and why shouldn't they, given

death's track record up to now), they go to give their last respects to their crucified Jesus. Their immediate concern is a pragmatic one. As though it had slipped their mind, they wonder, "Who will roll away the stone?" That stone, they thought, is the one thing that stands between Jesus and their ability to show their last respects.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Alarmed at the sight of the preacher in white?*

Or is it? As what happened next shows, what is really standing between them and giving Jesus his last respects (his just due), is not a stone, but their unbelief, the stone that is their heart, so to speak. With stone rolled away, Jesus nowhere in sight, and a preacher in white announcing "he has been raised," the women are "alarmed." That is, they stand in unbelief, "alarmed" that anyone could say such a thing. How quickly they forget—or disbelieve—that Jesus himself had prepared them for this very news earlier when he said that he must "be killed, and after three days rise" (Mark 8:31). You wonder how many preachers in white, after proclaiming this same news this Sunday, might get the same kind of "alarmed" looks?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *They went out and fled the tomb...*

Nature abhors a vacuum. Where there is no faith in Christ, no faith in the heart, only "terror" can fill the void. The terror of death, that is: death, understood as the judgment of God upon sinners. Faithless with regard to Christ crucified and raised, death is all these women can expect. Newly aware of that fate, they desperately flee the tomb with nothing to say. But try as they may to run from death, they cannot escape it.

PROGNOSIS: ...Fortunately Running into Jesus

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *He is ahead of you in Galilee.*

As futile as fleeing the tomb is, the Good News for these women—and us—is that they cannot out run Jesus. As the “preacher in white” proclaimed, Jesus is alive and already where they are going: in Galilee. He is always one step ahead of them, in Galilee, waiting for them to run into him. And how will they encounter him there? The same way they encountered him at the tomb. In the “preaching of the good news” (Mark 1:1) that “he is risen!” The “amazement” of Easter Sunday is not only the fact that Jesus is risen and has conquered death, but that God ensures that that fact be proclaimed by “preachers in white” in the everyday places (like Galilee) where people find themselves, in a world still threatened by death. The good news is that the death that the women feared—indeed, that everyone fears—has been conquered by the resurrection of Jesus. What remains to be done is the ongoing work of proclaiming it. The “proof” of the resurrection, then, is the fact that God provides “preachers in white” to proclaim the good news in Galilee and beyond. Wherever Christ is proclaimed there he is as the one who conquers death.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *...for terror and amazement had seized them.*

As ambiguous as Mark’s ending might seem to be, what is clear is that something more than the terror of death was at work in the women as a result of their encounter with the good news proclaimed by the “man in white.” They were also “seized by amazement.” Note: They were *seized*. That’s Mark’s descriptor for faith. Faith is not the end product of a process of rational deduction by which we discover something new. Rather, it is the experience of being grasped by the crucified and risen Christ through the proclamation of the Good News. Faith is “being seized by amazement” over Jesus and what he has accomplished for us. Faith is also the way we give Jesus our last or, better, our lasting respects. That’s because no better respect can be given him than to receive him—and his benefits—as the crucified and

risen Lord. To be sure, in this life, the heart of the believer remains a battle ground between death and life, terror and amazement. But wherever “amazement” over Jesus exists, there death is conquered. For this reason, the preaching of the good news needs to be a constant part of the believer’s life—so that “amazement” may abound.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Go. Tell the disciples and Peter...*

Because the message of the “preacher in white” has made it all the way from the tomb to Galilee to us, we can confidently assume one thing: that the women told the disciples and Peter the good news of the resurrection. To their own amazement, these women became, not only believers in the good news, but also preachers of the good news, and as preachers of the good news, demonstrable proof of the good news. They have become themselves “preachers in white” and so are we. Of course, what is this development but a picture of the emergent church, rising like Christ himself in every region of the world? Because of this church, those who are fleeing the terror of death can run into Jesus wherever they live. Because of us, God’s “preachers in white,” those who are struck by the terror of death can be seized by the amazement of the resurrection! Christ is risen! Death is conquered! Amazing! Alleluia!