

The Resurrection of Our Lord

HE GOES BEFORE YOU

Mark 16: 1-8

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Analysis by Norb Kabelitz

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.

Before you preach you may find it helpful to review Robert H. Smith's Easter Gospels, Augsburg 1983 (pp. 17-54 regarding Mark 16:1-8).

DIAGNOSIS: Sabbath Over; Over for Jesus and the

Disciples

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Anointing the Body of Jesus "for Good"*

"For good" has a double meaning here. The women had undoubtedly meant it for "Jesus' good" (see also 14:6, "She has performed a good service for me"), but implied by this anointing was also the sad end of Jesus' promising ministry. Gone "for good!" He was dead. Nothing left to do but to "anoint" the dead and go back home to the usual and familiar.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Blinded and Deafened by Unbelief (Mark 8:18)*

Jesus had been very explicit about being condemned to death and that "after three days [he would] rise again" (10:34); he mentioned the same at the Transfiguration (9:9). But none of his disciples are able to see or hear: one betrays, another denies, and all flee, so expressing their utter failure to obey (hear) his call of repentance and to believe the gospel (1:15). While the women seek to show "good" to Jesus, it is a dead Jesus they go to honor with final burial rituals. Without faith, discipleship dissolves into fear, failure and final rites by the women (as was customary, some of them express their grief with tears).

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Insiders Become Outsiders*

Jesus raises serious questions and claims that the disciples, who had received the secrets of the kingdom, should have been able to see and hear (4:11). But, unable to hear, they are now on the outside: "On the side of Satan" (8:33), with pagan desires as only Gentiles might have. Spiritual obtuseness and unbelief have left them like sheep without a shepherd, not only scattered but also afraid and even ashamed that they had been apparently duped into following a pretender. Their whole

endeavor has been a dead end. A failure in human terms, and a failure before God as well.

PROGNOSIS: Resurrection Vindicates and Serves the Cross of Good Friday

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Crucified Was Raised and Makes "Insiders"*

While the women were seeking Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, it was not a Risen Lord they sought, but only his dead body. But God had intervened, "He was raised," and by raising Jesus from the dead had vindicated the mission of the One "who had come not to serve, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45). The Cross in Mark was not a "setback or stumbling block along the way," it was the springboard for the completion of the mission. The mission was centered in the Cross and was confirmed by the resurrection. The resurrection serves the meaning of the Cross of Good Friday as the central piece of redemption. As Easter insiders, "We preach Christ and him crucified!" It is through this death and resurrection that "he goes before us." It is the solution and saving action of God "for us." Repeat: Easter did not merely eradicate, but vindicated, Good Friday!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Easter and Faith's Renewal*

Having come to the tomb to anoint a dead body, the women are now sent, commissioned, to "Go and tell" that Jesus is, as always, "going before them" as Shepherd to meet the disciples in Galilee, where it all began, and where "they left everything to follow him!" "Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle; tell the triumph far and wide; tell how Christ, the world's redeemer, vanquished death the day he died" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, hymn #356). "The Easter texts testify to a powerful change in Jesus, but they do it in order to empower the readers to new

life and renewed ministry” (Smith, Easter Gospels). Jesus’ resurrection is not merely proof of life beyond the grave, it initiates new life in the here and now.

Step 6: Final Prognosis : *The Resurrection Empowers Us for Gospel Proclamation & Promise*

He is risen! “See the place where they had laid him.” “Go and tell”! “He goes before you!” While amazement and astonishment freeze their (and our) tongues temporarily, we can be assured that they did not only “go” but “went and told.” Had they not, there’d be no Acts of the Apostles, and no Gospel according to St. Mark, Matthew or Luke, and no letter to the church at Corinth. The women did speak. “He will meet you in Galilee.” “Good Christian Friends Rejoice and Sing!” (ELW, hymn #385).