

Discussion Notes

Mark 16.9-20

October 25, 2015

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Last Week

- Two remarkable stories, made special by how unremarkable they are!
 - Joseph of Arimathea asks for the body of Jesus.
 - The “young man’s” report of Jesus’ resurrection. He seems quite matter of fact about it.
- The ordinary resurrection of Jesus made so in two ways.
 - Jesus is the God who *obviously*, after giving it up, takes up his life again.
 - “*In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.*” (John 1.4)
 - This occurs amidst regular life, shopping lists and all. Jesus is the God who enters our everyday, making the miraculous happen in the mundane.
- What about the women?!
 - No male witness of Jesus’ death or resurrection in Mark.
 - In a word full of oppression and abuse, God elevates women to their rightful place of equality and opportunity. If women could bear witness and pass on the news of Jesus’ death and resurrection then, they must be able now!
 - In this story women might stand for others who are excluded and oppressed.
- The ironic, abrupt ending.
 - The women are amazed and trembling and tell no one, when all along people couldn’t shut up about Jesus. This ending is ironic, but has a purpose and mind to challenge the listener to respond by sharing the news about Jesus, rather than keeping it to oneself.

What does Mark’s Ending Accomplish?

- It validates the cross, showing us God’s way of doing things is different than ours. The resurrection is often understood as the shiny “win”. This is true, but overemphasized might cast the cross in a “loss” light. But Jesus is glorified, lifted up, when he is lifted up on the cross. What does it mean when we sing, be high and lifted up? The Glory of God is seen in a man hanging on a cross.
 - *“My ways are not like your ways, my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:8)
 - *“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.”* (Mark 8.34-35)
- The ending also shows how ordinary, or natural the resurrection is. This will have major implications for the first Christians – which we’ll see soon in the rest of the story found in the New Testament. A Spirit poured out on all people – the Spirit in their regular lives.
- The abrupt ending makes us go back and read again.
 - Just when you think you’ve got Jesus figured out....look again! To experience and be curious.
 - Mark ends with a punch. A jolt. An exclamation point.

But Wait, There’s More!

- Mark 16.8 is where the earliest manuscripts of Mark end. But you’ll see in your Bibles that the story keeps going. Someone has added a bit more.
- This sheds more light on the gravity and transformative nature of Mark’s Jesus and how he affected people. This story shocked them.
- Read Mark 16.9-20
- Additional endings.
 - Fantastical vs. Canonical.

- Even in English we can tell this doesn't sound like Mark - probably put together somewhere near the beginning of the second century.
- The New Testament was put together in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Some accounts were fantastical and were not included. Others resonated with the truth found in all four gospels and were included. Mark's longer ending is likely written by Christians in the second century wrestling with what to do with this abrupt ending.
- If Mark didn't write this, where does the content come from?
 - Likely from the other gospels, read back into Mark. Mark was a starting point for both Matthew and Luke, and now we find some of Matthew and Luke put at the end of Mark.
 - A "Great Commission" moment like Matthew?
 - A road to Emmaus reference from Luke?
 - Tongues, serpents, poison references from Acts?
- The main thrust and theme of the epilogue is belief.
 - Two scenes of disbelief (Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road).
 - Jesus chastising the disciples for not believing.
 - John might be a little more accurate with his doubting Thomas story. John 20.26-29.
 - The main point, however, is to call the reader onto belief. What are you, the listener, going to do with this Jesus?

The End – what are we left with?

- At the end of Mark we are left with a sense of Curiosity and Commission.
- Curiosity, experience and trust. What John writes later – Mark lays the foundation for.
- Curiosity didn't kill the cat – it made her alive!

- As we come to the end of the story we are dared:
 - To hope, like the friends who lowered their paralytic friend through the ceiling to Jesus.
 - To reach out in desperation for him like the women with the blood hemorrhage.
 - To trust that even though everyone else treats you like an outsider, God calls you an insider, and welcomes you to his table like the gentile woman who dares ask Jesus to free her son from demonic possession.
 - To put all your eggs in one basket like Peter and when Jesus' asks, "who do you say that I am" say, "You're it! I know you're something special, and I'll do my best for follow you!"
 - To believe that God doesn't shoe away little children, that he takes them in his arms and blesses them. And that we can bring what is most precious to us to God and know he cares even more than we do!
 - To be bold like blind Bartimaeus! And cry out in our darkness, with the faith that Jesus is the one who gives us sight, doing for us what no one else can.
 - To trust God like the widow who gave him everything she had and resigned herself to his provision and care.
 - The end of Mark is all about curiosity – explore. Dare to experience God here with you!
- Commissioned in the way and Spirit of Jesus.
 - Clearly the first Christians were struck with the challenge of belief, faith, trust in Jesus – and they believed they would live like Jesus and do the kinds of things he did. I think this is what they were trying to get across.
 - This regular resurrection power of the Spirit lives in you – and we can keep writing to Gospel story today.

- The ending of Mark is all about commission. We have the unbelievable opportunity to be animated by God's Spirit, and join God in his word in the world.
- *"The same Spirit in Jesus, raising him from the dead, lives in you."*
(Romans 8.11)

Discussion Questions

- How does the abrupt ending of Mark strike you? Can you understand why early Christians added to it?
- As we close Mark, what challenge are you left with? Are you more curious, interested in exploring who God is and what he's really like?
- How might God's Spirit work in your everyday life? How can Jesus be glorified by how you live?
- What have you enjoyed about studying Mark's Gospel? What has it stirred in you in your relationship with God?