

Sunday April 17, 2022  
Lesson 7: Stirring Up Emotions  
Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

**Context:**

Our Easter lesson continues with Mark as we visit the resurrection narrative found in this gospel. As we read this resurrection narrative, we reflect on finding an empty tomb and what it must have felt like as a disciple to make such a discovery. We then think of how seeing an image of an empty tomb evokes feelings today and how we are transformed. The empty tomb makes a mark on us and transforms us as our senses are flooded with this empty, yet profound symbol.

Of all the gospels, Mark is the shortest account of the resurrection of Jesus. In these eight verses we have the resurrection of Jesus and not much more detail. Yet most biblical scholars assert the ending of verse eight contains the Greek word *gar*, or “for,” and is a participle which normally comes second in a clause of several or many words.<sup>1</sup> There are no words to follow *gar*, indicating it either ended there or something has been lost. Thus, we have the added verses of nine through twenty which came later than the traditional translations we possess. There is an ongoing debate whether the original ending is lost or if the account ended abruptly at verse eight.<sup>2</sup> Either way, the closing line is powerful and contains an image so strong in and of itself as we imagine discovering the truth of an empty tomb.

There are three movements in the text. First there are women who come to the tomb with spices for the body. Then, they meet a young man in the empty tomb who gives them a message. Finally, the women leave the tomb without any appearance of Jesus recorded in the text.

The narrative is powerful as the women have gone there to anoint the body, ready to do the work of serving the Lord in a final gesture. There is of course the question of how they will roll the stone back paired with the discovery of how it is rolled back. This is their first clue this is of God.

There is not much about the “young man” in the tomb, beyond being dressed in a white robe. The traditional designation of him as an angel (messenger) is appropriate as angels were often used to deliver important news in all the gospels.<sup>3</sup> There he gives the words: “He has risen, he is not here.” The women have come to the wrong place looking for the wrong thing. He continues with instructions for the women to return to the home base in Galilee, where Jesus began his ministry and as it seems, will continue it going further.

The women are terrified and flee the tomb, telling no one. Yet before the readers can become too harsh, the power of the text is how the angel tells them wherever they go, Jesus will be there. The people have expected Jesus to show them new ways of life and now he will indeed come about and fulfill their expectations in a way they could not imagine. Christ the Lord has come and they will not be able to escape him.

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<sup>1</sup> Williamson Jr., Lamar. “Mark.” *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2009), 283.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 284.

## **Application**

How do you feel about fairy tales? Do you love them? Most people I know like storytelling where there is a plot, interesting characters, and a conclusion which ties the story together. Growing up, I loved hearing fairy tales and some of them could be told over and over and I would never grow tired of them. They would inspire my imagination and help me to see the both the powerful darkness and beauty in this world.

Yet there was always a story which would end, and you wondered what would happen next. Did the prince and princess (usually becoming King and Queen at end of story) truly live happily ever after? So, the dragon or enchantress went away; did they return in some form? The kingdom had a period of peace following the battle or defeating of the villain, which always sounded lovely. Yet did even the magical kingdom face troubles or conflict again?

I often come the gospel of Mark and read this story through the lens of those fairy tales because the story never gets old and it never stops being true. Yet the beauty with this story is it continues to breathe life into me and the community around me. The story continues to play out as we see the power of the resurrection taking ahold of us and transforming us over and over again. It is the fairy tale which brings a joy so unspeakable, we like women at an empty tomb sometimes do not even possess the words to describe how it makes us feel.

Symbols can be some of the most powerful ways we connect with the word and in this case, we can hopefully see why. On its own, an empty tomb doesn't mean much to the world. It could be considered macabre even as we contemplate the finality of human existence. The tomb may be empty and yet it soon could be full containing our body or the body of someone we love.

Yet when we read the tomb in this story, our souls are flooded with words we cannot describe. We become hopeful of the future, of ours and those we love. We become grieved as we think of the pain of the sting of death and how it truly can shake us to our core. We become afraid; resurrection sounds like something totally out of human control. As wise as some of us may be, we worry we don't know enough to describe or process how we feel about not being able to describe rationally or logically the power of the empty tomb.

Like that of a fairy tale, we have feelings which flood our souls as we read this story and feel the very transformation happening within us. We may not know if the King and Queen have everything go their way or if the kingdom doesn't experience a new dragon to come terrorize the village. What we do know is we have one who has gone the way into the unknown and has come back like he promised to love and lead us even if the fairy tale seems to be going awry.

For those of us in the Christian faith, this ending in Mark can inspire us. There can be beauty and creativity in ambiguity with details missing. Jesus is not seen because he is already out doing things and he is waiting for us to catch up, to join in on the fun.

On Easter we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and how he is Lord and Savior. And yet we also celebrate because Jesus brings hope and offers us new life. Because we've been made new and risen from the dead, we can hear what God is calling us to do and see there is still time. We can stop wasting our time on doubts and anxieties and embrace how God has made us for this time and place. We can experience hope when we have nothing else to cling to and see how the empty tomb reminds us of how death never has the final say. And with that good news, we can live happily ever after.

What is so powerful about an empty tomb for you? What other symbols at Easter help you think about the power of the resurrection of Jesus? How do you think the short ending in Mark leaves room for inspiration? How will you be transformed in this Easter season and catch glimpses of the risen Jesus? What is Jesus calling you to do with this one precious life you've

been given?

Rev. Dr. E. Hunter Pugh  
Pastor of Brantley – Brunson Chapel Charge  
PO Box 71  
Brantley, AL 36009