

I can't get no satisfaction.

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'Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try.

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You can thank the lectionary for giving us the most unsatisfying account of the resurrection story. What is the lectionary? It's an agreed upon set of scriptures that are used across many denominations. The idea is that we get exposed to a healthy dose of Old Testament stories, New Testament writings, and the Gospels. The lectionary has a 3 year cycle. In Year A we hear the gospel of Matthew. In Year C we hear from Luke. This year, Year B is all about the gospel Mark. I know you're all wondering about John but I think this is enough of a seminary lecture for today.

So today my job is simple. In the next 15ish minutes, I get to convince you that these meager 8 verses are exactly what is needed to give us a satisfying Easter message.

To do that I am going to take some liberties. I'm going to take you back a few chapters in Mark.

Let's start with knowledge. It is very early in Jesus' ministry. His twelve disciples are chosen. He has many other followers. He's driven out evil spirits. He healed a man with leprosy, a paralyzed man, and a man with a withered hand. That last one...he did on the Sabbath.

He tells parables about a sower and a mustard seed. He calms a storm. He feeds five thousand and then 4 thousand. He walks on water. He has already sent out his disciples on their first mission trip and they come back amazed by all the miracles they were able to do in his name.

But he also eats with sinners. He and his disciples do things on the Sabbath that are just unacceptable. And he's a little mouthy with the Jewish leaders. And these are the things that get him into trouble with them. Jesus accuses them of being deaf, hard of heart, and blind.

This brings us to our passage from chapter 8. It's right after Jesus heals a blind man. Coincidence?

Jesus decides it's time to give his disciples a pop quiz. He asks them two questions. First, he asks, "Who do people say that I am." Can you see the disciples saying...ooh, ooh. Pick me Jesus, pick me! They go through the litany. John the Baptist, Elijah, another prophet. These are good answers. Easily defensible.

Then comes the big one. Who do you say I that am...(pause) tick, tick, tick, tick. Peter was that guy. You know the one that can't stand any period of silence. So he chimes in. When he does he makes a bold and profound statement. "You are the Messiah". The Messiah in Hebrew and Aramaic, the Christ in Greek. Both mean the same thing. "the anointed one."

How does Jesus respond? First, he makes no attempt to deny what Peter just said. This confession is accurate. Jesus is God's anointed. Jesus is the one to bring in God's Kingdom.

Second, he tells the disciples not to tell anyone what Peter just said. Why wouldn't he want everyone to know? Because there were still too many false expectations of what the Messiah should be. Jesus needed more time to show them who the Messiah really is.

After this Jesus will knuckle down. He will bring them bubbles of knowledge. He will teach them about his future as the Son of Man and what it really means to be the Messiah.

This brings us to Mark's account of the resurrection. It's one of the more highly debated topics of the scholarly world. The earliest manuscripts of Mark truly end with vs. 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.”

What the heck? Seriously, what in the heck? Where’s the sighting of Jesus at the tomb? Where’s the additional sightings of Jesus by disciples over the following 40 days. Where’s the ascension of Jesus? What on earth was Mark thinking?

Before we move on with that...want to take a look at the other two endings of Mark? Thank goodness! Thank you for choosing a longer sermon.

First, we have what we call the shorter ending.

“And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.”

Even our brief readings of Mark today should give you clues as to why this could not have been the ending he wrote. This is nothing like the way Mark wrote. Want proof? No where else in his gospel did Mark use imperishable or proclamation again, let alone together. This was a good try.

Let’s look at the longer ending of Mark...

Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table, and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.”

Again, the longer ending sounds nothing like anything else Mark wrote in his gospel. So why did someone think it was necessary to add these endings to this gospel? Because like you and me, at first glance Mark’s ending seems really off.

But if we accept that Mark’s ending of his gospel is really only 8 verses long, where does that leave us? Let’s find out.

First, it is faithful women who get first mention on that holy morning. Mary Magdalene and Mary Mother of James and Salome were also at the cross with Jesus and they are the ones headed to the tomb on that first day of the week. Is this just an affirmation of these women? Or is it also a criticism of the failings of the disciples. Where are they?

As the women approach the tomb, they ask who will roll away the stone. Aha! This is one of Mark’s favorite themes, the mystery of unbelief. These women, they should have known better. They forgot all about what Jesus told them. Jesus said he would meet them in Galilee after the resurrection on the third day. Truth is found in the obvious circumstances they find at the tomb. It calls for them to have faith in the hidden realities.

Mark 16:8 clearly points to this. The story of the resurrection was placed in the hands of women. It was for them to tell the stories. How out of context this is. Women didn't even count on a judicial level back then. Why does Mark only include them as witnesses of this morning? Because he wants us to see that the status of a witness is not what's important. The truth is the truth and that's all that is needed.

At the tomb the women find a young man in a white robe. An angel. This angel proclaims a message.

First the angel is very specific in the name Jesus of Nazareth. The roots of all of these events are grounded in the fact that Jesus was a real human from a real city.

Next the angel tells them that this Jesus who was crucified has been raised. The messianic secret is revealed. The grounds of messiahship are laid out. Death and resurrection are the redeeming work of the Messiah.

There is another message in this statement. There is a cost to discipleship. It's a path that is not permanently clear, bright, and shining. It is path that finds its way through lowly service, rejection, persecution, and maybe even death.

Now the angel tells the women where they can find the living Jesus. He has gone home. Home to Galilee. To encounter this risen Savior, they must go back home. Would they believe this. Would they have faith to go home to where the Lord has gone. Will he actually be there. Will they find him? There are no cast-iron certainties here. It's a test of trust in the one who lived, died, and rose to be with us forever.

We now come to the last "official" verse in Mark. You know, the one where we read about the women. Trembling, bewildered, afraid. What did they do? They fled and said nothing.

Let's look again at a cliff notes version of Mark's resurrection story. The women come to the tomb. A young man in the tomb gives them a message. The women leave the tomb. End of story.

Same three women who were at the cross when he died are the same three women named in our resurrection story.

The young man's message: He is risen. He is not here. Look at the place where they laid him. Tell the disciples, including Peter this. Go to Galilee and find him. He said he'd be there.

The three women run away. Afraid. Saying nothing. That's all we get from Mark.

Think back to our visit to Uncle Mark's house during Advent. Just as Mark didn't need a fancy birth story to prove that Jesus was the son of God, he doesn't need a fancy resurrection story to prove that God raised Jesus from the dead. Mark's Jesus will not be one to impress with displays of earthy power, eloquent speeches about messiahship, or being boxed into the patterns of the day.

Yes, according to vs 8, the women were afraid, the women ran from the tomb, the women said nothing. The bubbles of fear were clearly there. But somewhere along the line, think about it. They must have said something. The good news? It got out. How do I know this? Let me read Mark 1:1. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

He's alive! He's alive! He's alive!

Let us pray.