

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope... Everything that is done in the world is done by hope”

(Martin Luther King Jr.)

“All human wisdom is summed up in two words: wait and hope”

(Alexandre Dumas)

“Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither”

(C.S. Lewis)

“One of the earliest Resurrection scenes in the Bible is that of Thomas demanding evidence – he wanted to see, to touch, to prove. Those who question and probe and debate are heirs of the apostles just as much as the most fervent of believers”

(Joe Meacham)

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else”

(C.S. Lewis)

“A person who lives fully is prepared to die at any time”

(Mark Twain)

Prayer:

Lord God of all life and power, we praise you that through the mighty Resurrection of your Son you overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him.

We thank you that we, being dead in sin, are through faith in Christ made alive in him, given eternal life, and may reign with him in glory.

To you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. Amen.

Thoughts about NLT:

Those involved with NLT's work since it began are, in various ways, filling in the 'blank' at the end of Mark's gospel. The story of NLT is told in the book 'A Touch of Providence'. Not everyone has to leave their home town or country to fulfil the 'great commission'. There are opportunities all around us to spread the hope of the gospel.

Mark's Gospel – Study Notes for Small Groups

Week 6 – Being Alive

Jesus' Resurrection

If the gospel stories had ended with Jesus' crucifixion, we wouldn't talk about "Good Friday", because Jesus' death would have been the end — and just one of thousands of similar executions by the Roman authorities during the first century AD. In fact, we wouldn't even have the "first century" or "AD"! Jesus' resurrection, which is described in all four gospel accounts, and elsewhere in the Bible, is **central** to the Christian faith, to history, and to the world today.

Mark 16:1-8

Read **Mark 16:1-8** ... Mark's account of the empty tomb.

(a) The three women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) had been present at Jesus' crucifixion, and two of them at his burial (see **Mark 15:40** & **15:47**). So they know which tomb to go to (also confirmed by the angel in **v.6**). They come to **anoint Jesus' body** with spices — which was a bit like bringing flowers to a grave today. This would show respect and complete the primary burial, but also lessen the smell of decomposition. [*Usually, other bodies would be buried in the same tomb; and the bones would later be collected and put into an 'ossuary': the secondary burial*].

To discuss:

What helps us and what do we find difficult about going through the experience of bereavement?

(b) What they discover at the tomb is not what they are expecting. The stone has been rolled away, and a young man dressed in a white robe tells them that Jesus is not in the tomb. Rather, **"He is risen!"** Mark previously records that Jesus talked about his rising from the dead (see **8:31**, **9:9-10**, **9:31** & **10:34**), but it still comes to the women as a bolt from the blue! They are alarmed (**v.5-6**). It seems that Jesus' humiliating suffering and death has obliterated any hope

that Jesus had planted in them, and perhaps even the memory of what he had said —that he would be put to death, but rise again.

To discuss:

Can life's sad experiences take away any hope that we have? Do we expect good things or bad things to happen ahead of us in life?

(c) Mark mentions **a young man (v.5)**, Matthew mentions **an angel of the Lord (Matthew 28:2-3)**, whereas Luke mentions **two men (Luke 24:4)** at the tomb.

To discuss:

Is this a 'contradiction' between the accounts, do we think? – or rather the kind of minor variation we might expect between the genuine accounts of different eyewitnesses?

(d) The women are told that the risen Jesus is going ahead into **Galilee**, and that they will see him there, as he had told them (see **Mark 14:28**). Galilee, in the north, is where Jesus had appointed twelve of his disciples (**Mark 3:13-19**) and is where they would be commissioned again (**Matthew 28:16-20**).

To discuss:

Do we find God's presence to be more real in certain places? — in peaceful environments? in a church building? in places that have strong emotional attachments? Why, if God is everywhere?

(e) **Peter** is mentioned in **Mark 16:7**. He is traditionally understood to be the key eyewitness behind Mark's gospel, and is in many ways its key figure. Maybe it could almost be called the "Gospel of Peter", if much of the material depended on his input. As a character in the text, he gets things wrong time after time and ends up even denying that he knows Jesus (**Mark 14:66-72**). It is left to John to inform us that Peter was forgiven and reinstated by Jesus (**John 21:15-19**).

To discuss:

With whom do we most easily identify in Mark 16:1-8? — Peter, who blunders but comes to know deep forgiveness? the bewildered and terrified women (**v.8**)? the other disciples who weren't there and have to be told by others what has taken place?

Mark's ending (16:9-20)

Read **Mark 16:9-20**. There are things we can learn here, as it shows how the developing Christian community came to see the events of Easter and their significance. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (**v.9**), who went and told others. What was their response?

To discuss:

(a) Much emphasis is placed on the **initial unbelief** of the disciples despite the evidence of witnesses. What convinces us of the truth of the Resurrection? What makes us doubtful?

(b) Details are given about how the **gospel message is to spread** throughout the world, with particular reference to miraculous signs. How does the good news message spread most effectively today? — through acts of kindness? gossiping the gospel? preaching? or what?

There is a 'blank' at the end of Mark's gospel and we're invited to fill it in ourselves! Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (**Mark 16:15-18**). He taught them, gave them promises, and then he was taken up into heaven. The gospel story, which culminated in Jesus' death and resurrection, needs to be finished in **us**. The work of Jesus in us, the readers, is the on-going work of the gospel today. We become most fully alive when we come to know Jesus and follow him, rather than just know *about* God. We need to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead. Then we can live and face death, with the sure hope that the best is yet to come.

A few quotes to think about:

"Questioning the resurrection undermines the very heart of Christian belief"
(Dan Brown)

"Women are the first witnesses to the resurrection and pillars of the early church"
(John Ortberg)