

Introductory

This week's text has parallels in all the synoptics and in John. In TLH, this was the reading appointed for Easter Sunday. In LW, it is appointed for Easter Sunday in Series B. In LSB, John 20: 1-20 is always appointed for Easter Sunrise, and the synoptic reading for the particular year – Mark this year – is read during A, B, and C, respectively.

John has the most information about the post-resurrection Jesus, and these eight verses are all that Mark writes on the subject. You probably already know that most scholars think the text after verse 8 was added later, but it is included nonetheless in most English translations. My RSV Harper Study Bible has such a footnote about those verses.

As a subject for preaching, I can think of none that is less of general interest than talk of the authenticity of the end of Mark. Since those last verses are not included in the text, unless you bring it up, most people won't even give it a second thought. Easter Sunday is a day for alleluias and joy, a time to focus on the Resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

I have preached at least 75 Easter Sunday sermons, and I am as familiar with the texts as any other guy who has studied them a lot. As is the case in all such instances of familiar texts, it is therefore incumbent upon me to dig more deeply into the text and see what new thing God has to teach me for this Easter. There's always more to be learned.

The person who has been taught something new by God will be eager to share his new-found knowledge with other people, and that eagerness comes out in your preaching and teaching, and you will be a better preacher because of it. You will be saying the same thing you said last year, but you will not be saying the same thing you said last year.

Most modern commentaries on the Easter accounts spend far too much time talking about how the accounts of the First Easter differ from one another, and not enough time talking about what the text is telling us about the Resurrection. The reader either has to sift through all that stuff or use older commentaries written by people who still believed stuff.

In one of his two apologetics – we have referenced them here before – Dr. Arndt dealt extensively with those alleged contradictions among the Gospel writers and correctly concludes that the accounts are complimentary, not contradictory. I'm not the first one to note that the accounts all being different is an argument for, not against inerrancy.

If you and your hearers are in the mood for some apologetics, reference the Epistle text from First Corinthians, Paul's marvelous apologia for the importance of the Resurrection. We have speculated with Sean Hannity about what the world would look like without America, and we have wondered what the world would look like without Christianity.

Paul speculates about what Christianity would be without the Resurrection; not much. Paul Maier speculates about the same in his novel *Skeleton in God's Closet*. A little “what if” may be good on Easter Sunday, but not too much. I generally save that for the following Sundays in the Easter Season. Easter Sunday is the time for proclamation.

Textual Notes

1. The Sabbath has come and gone. Having begun at Sunset on Friday, Sabbath would have ended at sunset on Saturday. It's the way modern American Jews today observe Sabbath. It's Sunday morning, and Mark names, “Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμῃ – Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother) of Jacob, and Salome.”

The first mention by Mark is on Mary M, on whom John focuses, making her the central figure interacting with Jesus early on that morning. The Mary he refers to here is the one identified earlier (15:40) by the author as “Mary, the mother of James,” i.e. James the Younger (Less). The phrase “Mary of James” is an ellipsis, omitting the word “mother.”

We have visited several times and watch a lot of British TV, and I have noticed that they use more ellipsis than we do. For example, instead of asking somebody to come over to “my place,” they might ask that person to come over to “mine,” and the meaning is clear. The meaning of “Mary of James” is clear, especially in light of the earlier reference.

I distinguish the Johns (John A and John B) all the time because it's important to keep them straight in order to understand important things. I'm not sure people care or should care if we're talking about James the Lesser or James the Greater, and outside of BVM and Mary M, I'm not sure how much they want – or need – to know about the Marys.

Bible hub lists these Marys in the Bible,

Mary, Miriam, (a) the mother of Jesus, (b) of Magdala, (c) sister of Martha and Lazarus, (d) wife of Cleopas, (e) mother of John Mark, (f) a Christian woman in Rome.

Can we say that the Evangelists felt the same way about those things, especially when it comes to who was where when on that chaotic morning? Luke alone – and LSB – tells us that Joanna was there as myrrh bearer. He earlier had told us that she gave money to Jesus Ministries. This week, if I talk about women, it will be the three Mark mentions.

Of course, the critics who want to see errors and contradictions where there are none will make hay of different names dropped by different writers. The response to that is simply to ask ten different people who was in church on Sunday, and some of those ten were not there themselves. Different people will mention different people for different reasons.

Mary Magdalene was the woman out of whom Jesus cast seven demons, who then became a disciple of Him. She makes several NT appearances, was there at the Crucifixion and burial of Jesus, and she has the distinction (John) of being the first person to see Jesus alive after His death. LSB calls her a saint, and her feast day is July 22.

Mary the Mother of James is the second woman named. Matthew calls her “the other Mary,” twice, assuming it’s the same person. In Matthew 27:61, “the other Mary” is there for the burial of Jesus, and in 28:1, she is listed as one who was going to the tomb. It seems Matthew’s Jewish readers were expected to know the identity of the other Mary.

The third woman mentioned by Mark is Salome. This is not the Salome who danced for Herod, the one who was so well-played by Rita Hayward in the 1953 movie by the same name. This Salome is a married woman with children. Her husband is Zebedee the fisherman and she is mother to twin fishermen James and John (Matthew 27:56, 20:20).

Salome is also sister to Mother Mary (John 19:25), making the Sons of Thunder first cousins to Jesus. Jesus was a nephew to Salome. What a comfort it must have been to Mary to have her sister with her every step of the way throughout this horrible, and then joyful ordeal. All good to know, but I won’t spend a lot of time on it on Sunday.

Mark notes these three women, and “ἡγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν – and they brought spices that they might anoint Him.” The phrase “ἵνα ἀλείψωσιν – in order that” is a purpose clause. They went to that place with those spices for the express purpose of placing them on the body. It was the best they could do to preserve the body.

2. Mark fixes the time even more precisely, “καὶ λίαν πρωὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων – very early on the first day of the week,” which is Sunday. God invented the week. He worked six days creating it all, and on the seventh day – Saturday – He rested. Sunday is the first day of the week, and the Christians made it our Holy Day because of the Resurrection.

Even more specifically, “ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημα, ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου – they came to the tomb at sunrise.” Looking at the accounts, it looks like they left wherever they were at first light and arrived at the tomb shortly after, perhaps in a matter of minutes. Jerusalem was a lot smaller then, and the tomb was located very close to the city.

We aren’t told the location of the origin of their journey, but it was probably in or very near to Jerusalem. We know that the Twelve, including John the Apostle, were in Jerusalem, and given what Jesus had said to him and to Mary from the cross, we would expect Mary to be close to, or even with John the Apostle in that buttoned down room.

As we follow the movements on this morning of these women and others, like Peter and John, they seem to move quickly between places, an indication of close proximity. I am inclined to think that all of the players – or at least most of them – were together in that room. It’s what you do when a loved one dies, and somebody beloved had just died.

3. Mark tells us that, “ἔλεγον πρὸς ἑαυτάς – they were saying to one another,” i.e. they were talking among themselves as they walked. The verb is in the Imperfect Tense, meaning that they were having an extended discussion, “Τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου – who will roll away the stone from the opening for us?”

Grammatically, it’s actually not clear whether they were discussing the Stone Problem on their journey, or whether they talked about it after they got there. In the first case, they would have had to know that the tomb was sealed with a seal, which they would have. Less likely that they only discovered the Problem when they got there and saw the Stone.

4. Like a lot of things, you worry and fret about things that turn out to be time wasted with your worrying. When it says “καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι – and looking up,” that indicates that they were looking down, presumably dejected. When they looked up, “θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀνακεκύλισται ὁ λίθος – they see that the stone has been rolled away,” and it was big.

So what happened to the very large rock? Matthew (28:2) fills in that piece of information, telling us that there was an earthquake and “an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.” That has already taken place by the time the women got there. It scared the guards, and they have fled the scene.

5. The stone having been removed, “καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον – entering into the tomb, they saw” a young man. The first verb is an aorist participle, followed by a preposition of motion into, and the man, “νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιotoῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν – was sitting on the right, clothed in a white robe.”

When they saw that, “ἐξεθαμβήθησαν – they were amazed.” That verb “ἐκθαμβέομαι” is used four times in the NT, all usages by Mark. In 9:15, it is used to describe the reaction of people to Jesus’ healing of the demoniac boy, and in 14:33 it is used to describe Jesus’ emotional state when He goes off to pray at the Garden of Gethsemane.

The final two occurrences are here when they are that and in the next verse when the guy tells them to stop being that. The word describes the kind of reaction that any of us would have to entering a tomb, which may or may not have creeped them out already, seeing a young man dressed in a white robe sitting there, and then he starts talking to you.

6. The youngster “ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς Μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε – he says to them, ‘stop being amazed,’” then he gives them a reason not to be amazed. He knows why they are there, “Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον – you seek Jesus of Nazareth who has been crucified.” He knows why they are there and acknowledges the Crucifixion.

The verb for “crucified” is in the perfect tense, past action with results continuing into the future, and they do. He follows that verb immediately with another, “ἡγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν – He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.” That verb “ἡγέρθη – He is risen,” is an aorist indicative passive verb.

It means a one-time act done to the Son by the Father, which it had to be. Like the rest of us, if Jesus was really dead, and He was really dead, then He would have had a hard time deciding to rise from the dead. It's an idea that takes us right up to the precipice of things that we are able to understand and things that we *can't* understand about the Trinity.

But what a dramatic and sudden turn of events; in just a few short days from Crucifixion to Resurrection. To say that Jesus rose from the dead is one thing, but more to the point, if the women were looking for Jesus in this tomb, and they were, the man wants them to know that "He is not here." Then he bids them to look and see with our own two eyes.

The Christian religion is not about burying one's head in the sand or shutting one's eyes. We live our lives with eyes wide open, not fearing to take a look at what God is doing. We are often pleasantly surprised by what He has wrought, in our daily lives, in the lives of others, or like when we see the very body and true blood of Jesus on the Altar.

7. The young man continues with the emphatic "but," and a command, "ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἰπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ - but go and tell His disciples and Peter." Maybe Peter is special, after all. In Luke (24:34), the eleven are said to attest to the visitors from Emmaus that "the Lord has risen indeed and appeared to Simon (Peter)."

That actual appearance is nowhere recorded in the Bible. In today's Epistle, when Paul lists witnesses to the Resurrection, he says that Jesus appeared to "Cephas" (Simon, Peter), and then He appeared to the twelve, then" to five hundred witnesses. The Bible Scholars who think Peter gets special treatment because he needs special treatment...

Probably Peter did feel bad that he had denied Jesus – and not just once! Gill thinks,

he appeared to him first, before he did to any of the rest, though he had denied him in so shameful a manner: which is an instance of great grace and goodness: and he appeared to him, on purpose, no doubt, to comfort him under his distress; as well as being the oldest, disciple, and a man of figure and credit among them, his report would be believed. None of the writers of the New Testament take notice of this appearance besides, only the Apostle Paul, [1 Corinthians 15:5](#). It is certain that it was the same day Christ rose from the dead; and was after the women had seen him, and after Peter had, been at the sepulchre; and before the return of the two disciples from Emmaus, and before he showed himself to the rest of the apostles.

Go and tell Peter and the rest "ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν – that He is going ahead to Galilee, there you will see Him, just like He told you." The young man was correct; this is a review. Back in chapter fourteen, just a few days before this, Mark has related to us a short statement of Jesus to the disciples.

In the context of foretelling their abandonment of Him, Jesus quotes (14:28) from Zechariah (13:7) saying, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." He

follows that by telling them, “ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν – but after having risen, I will go before you into Galilee,” and it’s the same verb.

Yet, after a very busy day we find the Twelve holed up in Jerusalem (John 20), fearful that they too would be killed. Luke records that Jesus is on the road to Emmaus probably sometime in the afternoon. He’s actually on the road to Galilee, to reconnoiter with the Twelve. He apparently learned that they are not in Galilee and He returns to Jerusalem.

8. The young man is done talking and has told the women to get out of here, “καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου – and going out, they ran away from the tomb,” A quick perusal of the twenty-nine occurrences of the verb “φεύγω - fled” reveals that people who do what that verb is saying they do are running away from something scary.

Again, in just a short period of time these women had gone from mourners come to put spices on the body of their dead friend and son, and first the stone is rolled away, and then the young man had spoken to them, saying things that it would take awhile to get one’s head around, and the young man did not have to tell them more than once to leave.

Of their emotional state as they fled, Mark tells us, “εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις – fear and amazement had taken hold of them.” The first noun used to describe what had grabbed onto them is “τρόμος,” physical trembling. The word occurs five times in the NT, and three times it is coupled with “φόβος – fear” as in “fear and trembling,”

The word “ἔκστασις – amazement,” from which comes “ecstasy,” is the feeling a person gets when things are out of place, and there was a lot here that seemed to be out of place. We just read about it, and we have read about it many times in our lives, and the idea of Jesus rising from the dead is not new and for many Christians not really all that profound.

They were actually there, on site, and this was the first time something like this had ever happened. Well, okay there was Lazarus, but he hadn’t been abused like Jesus was abused, and he had not taken the point of a spear in the pericardium. The women are said to “be possessed” or “held by” those two things, which often go together for us as well.

That same fear so gripped them that, “καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ – they said nothing to nobody, because they were afraid.” The verb in in the Imperfect Tense, continual action in the past. The writer uses two adjectives to emphasize that they said “nothing – οὐδέν” to “nobody – οὐδενί” about what had happened to them that morning.

He gives the reason why, because “ἐφοβοῦντο,- they were afraid ” another imperfect verb indicating continual action in the past. We know from the other writers that their silence was short-lived, for we find them telling the others what they have seen. But when they told the others, they didn’t believe them. Two thousand years later, people still don’t.

Dead/Alive – Jesus was dead, and now He is alive. You were dead in your trespasses and sins, and now you are alive forever. Because He rose, you also shall rise.

Sermon Titles

The Son Rises

Hymns

Sing Easter Hymns on Easter Sunday.

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, IA

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark..* The Westminster Press, 1975

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RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

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VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

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Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html