

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

People of God, we are finally at the end of Mark's Gospel, and in the providence of God we just so happen come to the passage about the resurrection, on Easter Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the vindication that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of God. This is what Mark has been driving at through his whole Gospel, to get the reader to understand and know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Remember, in the story, Jesus is first declared to be the Son of God by the Father at His baptism. The Father also declared him to be His Son at the Mount of Transfiguration. In between those events, the only other people to acknowledge that Jesus was the Son of God was the demons.

In chp. 1, a demon says, "I know who you are - the Holy One of God." And there were other demons also later in chapter 1 that also knew who Jesus was, but he rebuked them all and silenced them and forbade them to speak about who he was.

In chp. 3 Mark also says, "And whenever the unclean spirits saw him they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." And he strictly ordered them to not make him known."

Another demon in chapter 5 also says, "What have you to do with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

So, throughout Mark's Gospel, God and the demons, the Spirit realm, know exactly who Jesus is. He is the Son of God. But Jesus silences the demons and forbids them from testifying about who he is.

But it is not only the demons Jesus silences. He also instructs those people he heals to keep his identity secret: In chp 1 after healing a leper he says, "See that you don't tell this to anyone."(1:44). In another story in chp. 5, Jesus raises a child from the dead but then "gave strict orders not to let

anyone know about this” (5:41-43). And again, after successfully healing a deaf and mute man in chp. 7, Jesus “commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it” (7:36).

In chp 8, at the hinge of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus asks his disciples, to see if they have a clue as to who he is, asks them: “who do you say that I am?” Peter says, “You are the Christ.” Now Peter doesn’t say that Jesus is the Son of God. He just says that he is the Christ. But Jesus then “strictly charged the disciples to tell no one about him.”

And from that point on, Jesus no longer has any need to silence anyone. You see, the reason Jesus tells everyone to be quiet is because they all wanted to proclaim him as a great miracle worker, or a caster out of demons or a great military king. But Jesus’ Messianic identity as the Son of God is not to be understood in terms of miracles and casting out demons, or in being a great moral teacher or a military leader,. His identity as the Christ, the Son of God is based primarily upon his mission to suffer, die, and resurrect from the dead. That is what the second half of Mark is all about.

This is why immediately after Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ, Jesus immediately began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.” This is the very first time Jesus said any of this in Mark. But Peter doesn’t want to hear it.

Ironically then, Mark tells his story in such a way that the first time Jesus is finally acknowledged to the Son of God by a human it is not by his friends, it is not by his disciples. It is not even by the women who hear the good news of the resurrection. The first person to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God was the Roman Centurion when he saw the way Jesus died.

Now you might think that the Roman Centurion, the guy who literally nailed Jesus to the cross, that he should not be the first person to acknowledge who Jesus is. What about his disciples? Where are they? Shouldn't they be the first ones to get it? But Mark makes his story a bit anti-climactic with this theme. Jesus dies, is abandoned by his friends, and the only person who is left to proclaim to the world who Jesus is, is the guy who killed him.

But the cross is not the end of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Not even close. Jesus Christ is further declared to be the Son of God in His resurrection from the dead. The Apostle Paul affirms this very truth in Romans 1 - He said Christ Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness by his resurrection from the dead."

But even then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is not the end of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. This whole story, beginning with his baptism and ending with His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, as Mark says in the first verse of His gospel, is the Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. The beginning - that is not without purpose.

So, we move from a flurry of praise and proclamation about who Jesus is in the beginning of the gospel, to almost complete silence and even mockery at the end. The people who should have been proclaiming who Christ is, abandon him, and have left his enemies to tell the story. But even then, we have the one lone voice of the Centurion, saying, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Too little too late, don't you think? If only the people would have been able to tell of who Jesus is before he died. If only Jesus would not have forced the people to keep his identity quiet early on, then maybe he would still be

alive, and everyone would have been proclaiming him to be the Son of God. But now all there is, is the silence of the tomb.

But as the women brought the spices to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week, to anoint Jesus body for burial, they discovered that Jesus Christ was not there. The large stone that was used to close the tomb was rolled away. And upon entering the tomb they saw a young man dressed in white on the right side of the tomb, and they were alarmed.

Now we know this young man was an angel. He told them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell the disciples, and Peter, that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as He told you.”

Now, we were told in the previous section, at Jesus death and burial, we were told that these women ministered to Jesus when he was ministering in Galilee. Now that means they were with Jesus when he was silencing everyone. Now, we might expect at this point that these women would be recognized it was now the time to go and tell everyone about Jesus, and who he really is, about how he was crucified but he rose from the dead. Or at least went to the disciples as the angel had told them.

They have been waiting for so long to have permission to tell the world about Jesus, but have been silenced by Jesus. But now, when the time has come to tell the world exactly who Jesus is, “the women fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” They didn’t even go to the disciples, or to Peter. They said nothing to anyone.

And this is how Mark ends his gospel. The people were proclaiming who Jesus was when they weren’t supposed to, because they did not have the complete picture. But once the complete picture is painted, once all the

details of the story have been presented, those who were once so zealous to tell everyone about Jesus, are now afraid and they don't tell anyone.

This is a weird ending, is it not? Why does Mark end his Gospel this way? It is so weird that another ending was added later on to finish the story. And I am going to talk about that ending in next weeks Sunday school. But in the earliest church manuscripts, this is where the story ends. Why?

Well, it ends there because, it is not the ending. It is the beginning. Remember, Mark 1:1 – The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The story is left open without resolution because the story isn't over. The story continues. Like in Acts, Luke writes and says, “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach...” The implication is that Acts is actually a continuation of the story of Jesus in the lives of his disciples.

In the same way, Mark is only the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And it doesn't end in 16:8, when the women are afraid and silent. It is the new beginning. It is literally the first day of the week, the new creation has come, Jesus Christ has reconciled all things in Heaven and Earth, and brought the old creation week to a close in himself, the old man has been crucified, and the New Man is raised from the dead.

And it is now up to you people of God, to continue to tell the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as his new disciples. The story is purposely left open, so that you can continue the story in your life. And that is the point of Mark's abrupt ending.

Just like at the end of the Chronicles of Narnia: this is the beginning of the real story. *All their life in this gospel and all their adventures in Mark had only been the cover and the title page: now at last is beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.*”

People of God, the Gospel of Mark is only the beginning. You must continue the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God by testifying about who Jesus is in your life. In how you live, and carry your cross. How you welcome little ones to Christ. In how you live with your husbands and wives. In how you treat widows and orphans. In how you serve one another. In other words, how you walk on the way of the Son of God as His disciple. This is the power of His resurrection at work within you. And he lives in You. This is extremely powerful.

Jordan Peterson has recently expressed the beginnings of faith in Christ, and one of the things he said through tears, was that in Christ the Narrative world of myth and story, and the real world of objective reality, come together. The world of story and your world of everyday experience come together and touch in the real person of Jesus Christ. This is what Lewis taught, that Jesus Christ is Myth become fact. And Peterson said, he believes that, but he also said, in tears, that this belief is almost too terrifying to believe. He said, "I don't know what would happen if you would fully believe it."

And perhaps these women who fled the tomb, also were rightly terrified about the implications of what this all means, that Jesus was crucified and is now declared to be the Son of God in His resurrection. What does all this mean?

He has reconciled Heaven and Earth himself, and therefore joined together in His body both Divinity and Glorified Humanity forever. He is the living Myth. He is the ideal made real. "He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is the Living One. He died, and behold, He is alive forever more, and He alone has the keys of Death and Hades."

Peterson says he doesn't know what would happen if you fully believed all that. Well, one thing that should happen is that death would hold no power over you. Because Christ is the resurrected Son of God, and because

you are in Him by faith and through baptism, Dying is only a means to resurrection. It means that all manners of earthly defeat are just cleverly disguised victories.

It also means that shame and suffering for Christ is actually glory and honor and praise. It means that to die to self is to live for Christ. It means you are enslaved to no man, because you are a slave to Christ. And so, being a slave to Christ means you are free to be a slave to others. It means that God is able to do far more abundantly than anything we could ever ask or think, and that power is at work within us. It means that husbands have the power to truly love their wives and wives, yes even today, can submit to their husbands in joy.

It means, in the words of Peter, the disciple behind the writing of Mark's Gospel, that "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the terrifying reality that God and man are one on Christ, that the narrative and the objective worlds are one in Christ, and that you have been brought into this glorious union of Myth and fact, of Heaven and Earth. And this should also give you such hope, that you live by faith in the stories, because the stories of Scripture are not just applicable to your life, they are quite literally the history of your faith. Learn the stories of death and resurrection, People of God.

They are all through the scriptures. The whole of Scripture, Jesus tells the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, is written about this one grand theme, that the Christ would suffer and die and on the third day be risen. That is the narrative world. And what happened in real life? The Christ

suffered and died and on the third day was risen., in accordance with the Scriptures.

So how does God work in the world? How does God work in the lives of his people? Death and resurrection! How do you know this. Because it says it in the word, and it is the life of Jesus. This is what you have been baptized into. This is what you pattern your days after. You die when you go to bed only to wake up anew in the morning. In order for you to have life in yourself, something has to die, and you must take death into yourself and eat it for it to give you life. Winter gives way to Spring. A caterpillar liquifies himself in his cocoon only to remerge as a butterfly. A plant dies, and its seed falls into the earth, only to have the seed sprout into a new plant.

These are the glorious treasures of the Resurrection and the New Creation written into the Objective World. These are all just small reminders to you that Christ has accomplished the everlasting defeat and victory over sin, death, and the devil, and His power of New Birth is within those who believe in Jesus. This same power that was at work in Christ to raise him from the dead is at work within you, if you would only believe, and live accordingly.

Mark's gospel is only the beginning. And the rest of the story continues in you. Will you choose to tell others of this terrifyingly beautiful and glorious truth? Will you change your life to carry your cross, so that God can raise you up too? Or will you be too afraid follow Christ to the cross? But we must always remember that it is because of the cross that we can confidently declare, that Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed. Amen.