

- And it isn't just these three who are going to see the resurrected Jesus. Paul claims that Jesus *appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.* (1 Corinthians 15:15-18)

- Jesus has been brought back to life in his resurrected body – Jesus is the first person in history to do this. Jesus is the prototype or first fruit of what all of us have to look forward to – That we too will be resurrected and given new bodies. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 51 and 52: *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

2.5 Conclusion

- It is all too much for the two Marys and Salome to take in. They had simply gone to anoint Jesus' body. To finish his burial rites. As they approach the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea they are alarmed to see that the stone to the tomb has been rolled away and that the body of Jesus is no longer there. Confronted by an angel who tells them that Jesus is alive their alarm turns to panic: *Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.* (Mark 16:8)
- How are we going to react to the news the angel brought the two Marys and Salome? Will we leave church this Easter Sunday like them fearful of what this news means or will we leave here today excited about what this news promises to us. That all of us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ will also '*at that last trumpet*' (1 Corinthians 15:52) be similarly raised into our own resurrected bodies.

3. Questions to consider at home

3.1 '*Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb.*' (Mark 16:2) Why were the two Marys and Salome going to the tomb?

3.2 Do you find any of the popular arguments to explain the empty tomb convincing?

3.3 '*You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.*' (Mark 16:6) What did this mean for *Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome*' (Mark 16:1)? What did it mean for the disciples? What does it mean today for us?

3.4 If you are convinced that '*He is risen*' and that '*He is not here*' will you, as a result, do anything differently?

3.5 Which of the three arguments outlined here for what happens 'after death' do you find convincing?

3.6 If God looks after the souls of his people 'after death' until, at the last day, he gives his people new bodies, where do the souls of his people reside before the last day and where do the new bodies reside after the last day?

3.7 At a Good Friday dinner party someone remarks that they cannot understand why people in this day and age want to remember the death of some poor wandering Jew who died 2000 years ago. How would you respond?

Matthew Street - Easter Day - 31st March 2024



The St J's Group

Mark 16:1-8 - '*He has risen! He is not here.*'

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Mark 16:1-8

1 *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?' 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- When we read a book or watch a play, film or TV programme most of us like to feel comforted that in the end good will triumph over evil.
- Three women: '*Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome*' (Mark 16:1) along with the Disciples and most of the Jewish population were convinced that Jesus was the One. He was the promised Messiah. He was going to free them from Roman occupation and make Israel great once again. Just as it had been in King David's day. Good was finally going to triumph over evil.
- Passover week had started so well: *A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road,*



The Two Marys and Salome at The Tomb (1876)
William Adolphe Bouguereau

while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Jesus and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!' (Matthew 21:8-9)

- But it ended in disaster: *'It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'* When he had said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)
- With their dreams shattered, these three women:
 - 1) Come to ANOINT Jesus' body and complete his funeral rites.
 - 2) As they do they are ALARMED by what they find and come to
 - 3) Discover that good has indeed triumphed over evil and that Jesus is ALIVE.

2.2 Anoint

- *Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs.* (Mark 15:40-1). The three women in our passage *'Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome'* (Mark 16:1) were all at the cross. They had witnessed, first hand, the death of Jesus. They had seen how evil seemed to have triumphed over good. All their hopes and expectations had been totally destroyed by the events of the cross.
- As we consider the cross what do we think about? Do we recognise that the evil inside each one of us nailed Jesus to that cross?
- The two Marys had also witnessed where Jesus was buried: *'Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.'* (Mark 15:47)
- *'Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb'* (Mark 16:2) The reason that all three of them were on their way to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was because they couldn't finish the job of anointing Jesus' body on the Friday because the Jewish sabbath started at 6pm and didn't finish until 6am on the Sunday.
- They were taking with them 'spices' to embalm Jesus' body. The main ingredient would have been myrrh that strange third gift given to Jesus at his birth by one of the wise men. They were in effect the myrrh bearers.
- According to Jewish burial rites Jesus' body would have been laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea until only the bones of his body were left. These bones would then have been transferred to an ossuary.

2.3 Alarmed

- As they approach the tomb they ask: *"Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"* (Mark 16:3). They know that the stone protecting Jesus' burial place had been put in place before they left on that Friday evening.
- Their alarm begins with the sight of the stone having been rolled away: *'they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.'* (Mark 16:4)
- Their alarm continues when they enter the tomb and realise that Jesus' body is not there. The tomb was empty!
- Why was the tomb empty? Down the ages as well as at the time four main theories have been put forward:

2.3.1 The wrong tomb theory:

- This theory argues that these three women just got confused in the early dawn mist and Jesus' body was safely in some other grave just a few yards away.

- But how would this be possible given that they'd seen where Jesus was buried just 36 hours before and some of them had helped bury him.

2.3.2 The swoon theory:

- This theory argues that Jesus was not really dead.
- Perhaps the Romans bodged the job and couldn't tell the difference between a dead body and one still breathing?
- But does this argument really hold water given the fact that the Romans did not break Jesus' legs because he was clearly dead already.

2.3.3 The stolen body theory:

- This theory argues that the (Roman or Jewish) authorities stole the body.
- This too seems unlikely given that 7 weeks later Peter is proclaiming that Jesus, unlike King David, has been raised from the dead.
- Surely at that point the authorities would have produced the body? Or, at least, explained what they did with it? It would have suited them far better to find the body and squash the embarrassing claims of Peter and the other early Christians.

2.3.4 The hidden body theory

- This theory argues that Jesus' followers couldn't bear to leave things alone. They stole the body, buried it somewhere else, and then began to claim that Jesus was alive.
- To disturb a grave was itself a capital offence. That's why the authorities would not have dared to remove the body (instead they placed some guards around it); nor would the disciples have dared to either. Why risk it? What would they gain except trouble?
- Nothing suggests that they were in the mood for such a courageous gamble. Their hopes along with those three women were in tatters buried in that grave with Jesus.
- How do we explain the empty tomb? Which, if any, of these theories do we think holds the most water or is there another explanation.

2.4 Alive

- Their alarm is further heightened when they meet an angel: *'they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.'* (Mark 16:5) who tells them that Jesus is not dead but alive: *'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."*
- What the two Marys and Salome stumble across that first Easter Sunday is the most significant event in history – *'He has risen! He is not here.'* (Mark 16:6) Jesus was not there because he had been raised to life in his resurrected body.
- Can it be true? Can it be true that Jesus a mere man, lived and died and rose again?
- There would have been three conflicting views about what happens when people died in Jesus' day. In essence these views continue to this day.
 - 1) Nothing beyond the grave - No Eternal life – Our bodies decay and our souls cease to exist.
 - 2) Something beyond the grave - Eternal Life WITHOUT our body but ONLY with our Soul.
 - 3) Something beyond the grave - Eternal Life that starts with our soul but will eventually include our body as well - RESURRECTION
- No Jew, not one of the disciples ever anticipated or understood until afterwards what Jesus meant when he said: *"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"* (Mat 20:18-19)