

The STORY - Week Twenty-Seven

April 16, 2017 *EASTER!* Freedom From Fear

MARK 16:1-8

Generations of interpreters have been so disturbed by this ending that they rushed to supply their own. Early Christians extended the text, providing the endings that “must” have been intended. Only God’s faithfulness will complete this story, and the God Who has split open the heavens at Jesus’ baptism and torn the curtain of the temple at Jesus’ death will be put off neither by our failures, nor infidelity, not by our most sophisticated interpretive schemes — Beverly Roberts Gaventa (2008).

The sacrament of baptism is also often part of the Easter Vigil. This practice has its beginning in the early church, when catechumens prepared throughout all of Lent for baptism at Easter—Gail R. O’Day (2008).

Perhaps in the strange providence of God, the way Mark’s book now finishes encourages us all the more to explore not only the faith of the early church, that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, but our own faith. There is a blank at the end and we are invited to fill it ourselves. Do we take Easter for granted, or have we found ourselves awestruck at the strange new work of God? What do we know of the risen Lord? Where is He now going ahead of us? What tasks has He for us to undertake today, to take ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ to the ends of the earth - N. T. Wright (2004)?

Next week: *New Beginnings in the Early Church*

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THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY

Easter is a story of love laced with fear.

Disciples, Pharisees, Pilate, Sanhedrin.

Jesus knew they were afraid and He understood.

Jesus' resurrected life brings peace instead of fear.

When we are no longer afraid:

1) *We can trust the God Who made us.*

O LORD my God, in You I trust... Psalm 7:1a

2) *We can surrender our will for His.*

3) *Baptism, returning God's tithe to Him, and choosing*

...church membership is no longer risky.

Instead of fear, Jesus gives faith.

Lord, give us all a spirit to know, love and trust You.

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