

Dear Friends,

Mark 16: 6-8

Three of the women who are disciples of Jesus have gone to his tomb to anoint his corpse. They have found the tomb empty except for an angel. The angel tells them that Jesus has been raised. He calls them to go to the rest of his disciples and say, "Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you".

This is in the present tense. Jesus is now, at this moment, going ahead of them. It's happening already. Jesus is on the move.

The Greek word which is translated "he goes ahead" can be understood in two ways. It could be that he goes with you, you travel together, but he goes at the front, as the leader. Or it could be that Jesus gets there first, so that when you arrive, you find him already there. It's probably the second understanding that is intended on this occasion. Jesus arrives first and you see him when you get there.

Nevertheless, Jesus does go before you in both of these senses. He walks alongside you, guiding and leading you in all of your ways. He also arrives first and prepares the ground, so that wherever you go, you find him already there, whatever you experience, you find him there, waiting for you. That's true of everything, but this story particularly reminds you that it's true of death. Jesus has passed through death. At the hour of your death, you may know that Jesus has gone ahead of you. When you die, there you will see him and it will be okay, because he will be there.

For the first disciples, the place where they will meet him is Galilee. That's the place of their everyday lives, where they live and work and have their relationships. In their own ordinary lives, they will encounter Jesus. He will be there. For you too, in your ordinary lives, as you do the things you do and meet the people you meet, there you will see Jesus. He is already there, waiting for you.

What good news for the women to share! What a great message for them to take to the rest of his friends. But look at what happens. It says that the women "went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid".

And that's where Mark's gospel ends. Throughout his book women have been appreciated for the things they have said and done. They alone were at the cross and at the burial of Jesus. It was they who went to the tomb and were given the good news of the resurrection. But at this last moment, they are overcome by fear and when told to share a message, they instead say nothing to anyone.

Some people think that the gospel went on, or that it was intended to continue but the rest was lost or never got written. In your Bible you will find more verses in Mark chapter 16, but they are not part of his original work. Some think that this is where Mark intended to stop. I like the idea that Mark thought that this was exactly the right place to end. It is as though he is crying out for you who hear the story to make a response. It is not right for this to end in fear and with the good news being

kept secret. The message must get out and you who have heard it are now the ideal people to share it.

So, you are called to go to your Galilee, the place of your everyday life, where you live and work and have your relationships. There you will see Jesus. And there, in that place, you are called to share the good news that Jesus has been raised, that death does not have the last word, that with God there is always a new beginning.

The question is how will you respond. Will you hide and say nothing to anyone? Or will you join with Jesus, share his message and share with him in his way?

God bless you,

Tony