

GraceCity Easter Study

Because He Lives



Week #1

April 15-April 21, 2019

“Because He Lives” (Mark 16:1-8)

Jesus was no ordinary King. He came to Earth as a baby, born humbly in a manger far away from the cultural centers. He grew as any human and began his public ministry at age 30. Then as his popularity increased and his power and might were on full display, Jesus suddenly died, brutally, on a cross. Despite Jesus' own proclamations, even his chosen Disciples did not believe the all-powerful King of the Jews had to die. He was supposed to conquer and vanquish the people's oppressors. But God had a plan, a plan as old as time. The tomb would be found empty. As the young man in the white robe declared, “He is not here. He is risen!”

Preparation Questions:

1. From the Fall in Chapter 3 of Genesis to the last words of Revelation, the overarching story of the Bible is God calling his people back to him. Where does the death and resurrection of Jesus fit in this larger narrative?
2. In the Gospel According to Mark, Jesus tells his disciples of his death and resurrection three times (Mark 8:31-33, Mark 9:30-32, and Mark 10:32-34). What do the disciples learn from each telling?
3. Much happened in Jesus' last week on Earth, which we celebrate from Palm Sunday to Easter. Choose a few of the events of Holy Week and take a closer look.
 - Triumphant entrance into Jerusalem – Mark 11:1-11
 - Jesus anointed at Bethany – Mark 14:1-11
 - The Last Supper – Mark 14:12-26
 - The trial – Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-15
 - The crucifixion and death of Jesus – Mark 15:21-41

Read: Mark 16:1-8

Notes/Definitions:

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome – As a group, these women are specifically called out in Mark 15:41 for following Jesus in Galilee and caring for his needs.

Mary Magdalene – Mary Magdalene was exorcised of seven demons (Luke 8:2). She had means to provide support and assistance to Jesus and his Disciples.

Mary the mother of James – The mother of the Apostle James the Younger (the Less) (Mark 15:40).

Salome – The mother of the Apostles, James and John, and wife of Zebedee. She was the one who asked Jesus for special favor for her sons (Matthew 20:20-24, Mark 10:35-40).

Jewish burial customs – Typically Jewish people would bury their dead and attend to the body on the day of death. However, Jesus died three hours before the start of the Sabbath, so there was not enough time to properly attend to his body. Instead he was hastily put in the tomb, and the women returned after Sabbath to finish the burial preparation process. The spices were for odor and preserving the body.

This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org.

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The tomb – Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Aramithea (Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:43). In those times, Jewish people buried their dead in caves or tombs carved out of soft rock. These tombs were often family tombs.

Questions:

1. Chapter 15 of Mark recounts Jesus receiving his death sentence, being crucified, dying, and being buried. What is the mood of the Disciples and Christ's followers during this time?
2. How might have Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome have felt as they set out that morning to anoint Jesus' body? Why did they leave so early in the morning? What were their concerns? What did they expect to see?
3. The women did not know how they would roll away the stone from the tomb; yet, they approached in faith that they would be able to complete their task. How do we report for duty to serve even when we perceive obstructions are in the way? What stones has God rolled away in your life?
4. What was the women's reaction to seeing that the stone had been rolled away?
5. The women encountered a young man dressed in a white robe in the tomb. What was his message? What did he instruct the women to do?
6. Why might Peter have been specifically mentioned in Verse 7?
7. Despite the miracles that the Disciples and these women saw Jesus perform, Jesus' arrest, conviction, and death led them to lose heart. How does the toughness and callousness of life on Earth cause us to lose heart? Contrastingly, how does the death conquering power of Jesus give us confidence? What hope does it give, not only eternally but also now while on Earth?
8. The women were rewarded for their devotion by being the first to see and hear about Jesus being raised from the dead. What do we learn from that?
9. In that time, women were not allowed to be witnesses in a court of law; their testimony was considered unreliable. What do we gather from that they were given the responsibility to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen?

Closing Prayer:

Take a moment to praise God that while we were still sinners, He sent His son as the ultimate sacrifice to atone for our sins and to give us eternal life. Pray for those who do not yet know Him and the gift that was given to all. Pray for the hearts of devotion that these women showed in their dedication to serve Jesus even after death. Pray that we would have ears to hear and eyes to see the ways that the Lord is moving and believe in His power and promises. Invite those you have been praying for to join you at church this Easter.