

**Mark 16:1-8**

**The said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid**

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*..and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid...* This verse is regarded as the oldest ending of Mark and is well reported in the early church. It looks like the ending, and we know verses 9-20 were added later. They contain material about the resurrection that is consistent with the endings of the other gospels, and material in Acts and the Epistles. There is a logical reason for the additional material in Mark, but why did his original work end as it does? Did Mark run out of space and was unable to finish? Was the original manuscript mutilated or lost? Did Mark die? Scholars now believe this ending was part of Mark's plan in writing.

The sun was rising as the women came. Their love for Jesus was great, and this was a moment of re-creation, but they expected to find a dead man. They do not comprehend the meaning of the angel's words. Nothing they see or hear convinces them things are any different from Good Friday. And if they had felt differently, in the world of their day, their testimony would not have been counted.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the presence of God evokes holy awe. When Mark says *and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid* he shows us nothing new, except that in this case it has an added edge. Throughout his Gospel Mark regularly depicts the disciples as fearful and disbelieving. And now it the last thing they expected to find was that God would triumph!

Mark's ending is for the relationship between the reader and himself. From the outset Mark tells us who Jesus is and what will become of him. At every prediction of the passion and the resurrection the disciples misunderstand. At the end silence is the first testimony, but ironically we are here celebrating the outcome of this story.

We have to allow that the Mark wrote because he was alive with the new life which he and others did not expect to see or feel. His Gospel, by its very existence, is a witness to faith that defeats the ending.

Resurrection faith is the knowledge that God succeeds in spite of us. The living word of God will not be held back by unbelief, or testimony that is ruled out of order. The cross cannot quench God's gift of new life, nor can the stone at the front of the tomb hold it back. God who created the world from nothing, brought new life where none was expected. Easter Day witnesses that life, not death, holds the ultimate power. Jesus is out. He goes before his disciples into the world, calling them to meet him there. All that is required is that we be willing to do so.

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