**BCM Bible Study – Dec. 1/2, 2021**

**Mark 15:33-16:8**

Here we find ourselves at one of the most hopeful passages of Scripture for any Christian! This Gospel is unique in how it ends and still so very rich of truth for us to learn from!

**Read 15:33-15:41**

One thing to make sure we remember is that Jesus’ place on the cross right now has happened so very quickly as Jesus was just arrested the previous night. Mark adds all of these time based details to make sure we realize just how rapidly this process occurred!

* Why might Mark have put such a large emphasis on the three hours of darkness that occurred prior to Jesus’ death?
  + The penultimate plague in Egypt (Exodus 10:21) was extraordinary darkness coming over the land, right before the plague on the firstborn (Exodus 11) and then Passover was first instituted following these (Exodus 12). Jesus’ death occurred during Passover as well (Mark 15:6). Perhaps this was a reference back to this.
  + Others have mentioned this as mourning Jesus while some try to explain it away to a solar eclipse. Yet, we can be confident that due to the timing of Passover this was instead supernatural and does most assuredly relate to Jesus!
* Jesus cries out to God in this moment of extraordinary distress with Scripture. **Read Psalm 22:1-5, 27-31**
  + Jesus has been notably silent throughout the entire process leading up to and during his crucifixion. What is noteworthy about the way that Jesus cries out with Scripture?
  + What does this reveal about the way that Jesus had trained himself as a human being to love Scripture?
  + When we hear this passage referenced we often think of the first half and its pain. Yet, how do v.27-31 impact your understanding of Jesus pointing to this Psalm?
* “The loud cry [of Jesus] is unusual since crucified victims normally died of exhaustion and lack of breath.” (Garland)
  + How does the way that Jesus exceeds human capability here and chooses this as the end of his life impact your understanding of the crucifixion? How does it impact your view of Jesus?

“The torn curtain and fractured tombs say it all. Christ’s death liberates those who believe from the bonds of death. It gives them access to God’s holy presence.” (Hughes)

* Once again, we witness another enemy of the cross acknowledge the glory of Jesus as truly being the son of God. What might this soldier have observed that would so quickly change his tone from mocking to awe?

Let us make sure to take note of the women who are mentioned, by name, as having watched Jesus’ death and are expressed among those who followed Jesus.

**Read 15:42-47**

Joseph, a member of the Sanhedrin, acts boldly in faith here as he seeks to give Jesus a more proper burial. To do this, Joseph gave Jesus his own tomb and offered up many resources, in addition to his whole life to serve Jesus.

* **Read John 19:31-34** for some more context upon this situation.
* Both the reactions of the soldiers and Pilate indicated that death after six hours on a cross was impressively short. How does the duality of pain and rejoicing in Jesus’ life prepare us for the life of a long-term Christian?
* Something which could be lost on us today is the value of all that is done to honor Jesus in his death and bring glory to him at this moment. What can we do to not just glaze over all that Jesus’ followers did to glorify him in those moments?

**Read 16:1-8**

We now find the three women mentioned at Jesus’ crucifixion on their way to finish the anointing and preparation of Jesus’ body for long-term burial.

* They were so concerned with serving their Lord, that they thought about the moving of the massive stone only while already on the way there. Have you ever experienced a moment of such energized devotion to God?
* An angel greets them and gives glory to Jesus in the tomb as well as telling them where to find Jesus. **Read Mark 14:28** for a reminder of the connection here.
  + What significance is there in Jesus meeting them in Galilee as opposed to somewhere else?
  + *Jerusalem is no longer the central location for faith, as it had been for the Jewish people. The early church will begin here, yet very quickly it will expand out from this location!*
* These women would not have been accepted for reliable testimony within Jewish culture. How does this continue to show the revolutionary (and reliable) nature of Christianity?
* In some way, this book ends in a very abrupt fashion that leaves us wanting more. Why do you think that Mark might have ended this book with the women there, fearful and quiet?
* **Read Mark 1:1** How does Mark’s introduction help you to understand his conclusion?

Let us remember that the original audience of this book was a struggling, persecuted church. How would this telling of the Gospel be an encouragement to a discouraged group of believers?

* “He [Mark] writes for those who may feel like the disciples, struggling against the wind in a tiny skiff during the dark hours of the night and feeling acute anguish because Jesus is not physically there to be touched or to give a word of assurance.” (Garland)
* The women were initially fearful yet ultimately did go on to tell the other disciples as asked. How does this serve to encourage you in those moments where you are intimidated or apprehensive?
* Has this study of Mark encouraged your faith? If so, how?

Share any other reflections upon the semester and how God has worked through Mark to grow and impact your faith. Are there any ways that you need to respond to those truths now? What about ways to continue to respond over the winter break?

**Extra Notes**

* There has been much debate over Mark 16:9-20 and whether or not it should be included in someone’s study of the book. One of the biggest groups in favor of its inclusion are those who feel that there is not enough conclusion with verses 1-8. However, the earliest Greek manuscripts do not include it, nor do the early church leaders seem to acknowledge it.
  + This should not lead anyone to discomfort with their Bibles however. The other Gospels (as well as our faith today) should make it readily apparent that the women eventually spoke and that Jesus did in fact ascend.
  + Instead, this is about textual accuracy and approaching our Biblical interpretations with care.
* Perhaps they are doing it out of mocking, perhaps out of mishearing, but those present for his death heard him crying for Elijah.
  + Elijah was considered the patron saint for those suffering, so perhaps this helped that.
  + Ultimately, we know that Elijah’s coming before Jesus again has been fulfilled through John the Baptist.
* One thing we need to make sure to acknowledge is the significance of the temple veil’s tearing .This was originally meant to only allow for the High Priest to enter into proximity with God, yet Jesus as our Great High Priest allows this to occur for all of us!
  + In this way, Jesus does tear down the temple and rebuild it!
  + The telling of Jesus’ death in Matthew 27 also mentions several resurrections occurring at the same time as Jesus’ death further showing his power!
* “Mark’s ending, therefore, reveals that the “successful conclusion of the story cannot be “dependent upon human performance.”” (Garland)