

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 16:1-8

Year B - Easter Day Service, Text: Mark 16:1-8
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Through His death and resurrection, Jesus fulfills the message embedded in His name, which is Immanuel, meaning “God with us” (Matt. 1:22). He will remain in their midst as forgiving Savior, servant Lord, and divine Teacher. Jesus’ death and resurrection are not merely the climax of Matthew’s narrative; they constitute a new beginning to world history.

Verse 16:1: Although Mark 16:1 states that women went to the tomb early on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus’ body, Matthew states that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to see Jesus’ tomb as the day was dawning. They would not have been permitted to go close to the tomb by the soldiers who were guarding it. Given that to their knowledge, the tomb was sealed, leaves one wondering what exactly they intended to do.

Verse 16:2: As they draw near to the tomb, an earthquake occurs. An angel descended from heaven has rolled back the stone that had been sealing the entrance and is sitting on it; see Exodus 3:2–6; Acts 7:30. A great earthquake denotes the presence and action of God as at the Exodus and Sinai events. Just as remarkable signs took place in the heavens above at Jesus’ birth; signs in the earth beneath take place at Jesus’ resurrection.

When Satan tempted Jesus (4:1–11), he suggested that He win a following by performing stunts, for example, by throwing Himself from the pinnacle of the Temple and expecting His Father to rescue Him before He struck the stone slabs below. However, Jesus refused to use divine power to avoid the way of the cross and righteousness and service. But now Jesus’ Father uses an angel to reveal the wonder of an event in which He vindicates His Son’s ministry!

Verse 16:3: The appearance of the angelic being is described. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was as white as snow. The angel’s appearance reflects the glowing presence of Jesus in the Transfiguration event (17:1–8).

In Mark’s narrative (16:1–8), the “young man” serves primarily as a proclaimer of a profound truth, sitting on the right hand within the tomb, and making known the Good News of the First Easter. Matthew portrays the angel as an apocalyptic figure with a shattering presence who hurls the tomb’s stone door aside and declares the beginning of a New Age in cosmic history!

Verse 16:4: Those guarding the tomb are terrified. They collapse like dead men! Hence, the dead and defenseless One comes to life and brings new life to His people while the supposedly mighty of the earth collapse as if lifeless!

Verses 16:5-7: The angel speaks to the women just as an angel of the Lord had spoken to Joseph after Mary conceived (1:20–25). They have come to see a tomb, a house of death, to pay their last respects to a dead Friend — perhaps to keep a vigil and chant a dirge. However, the angel proclaims to them a message about new life: “I know that you were looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised, as He said.”

Jesus was crucified by powerful enemies who were shocked and frightened by His claim that He had heard His Father’s voice calling Him to a radical way of life as Servant Messiah — calling Him to identify with outcasts and to share the burdens of the oppressed.

He was crucified by religious and political leaders, who mocked Him when He displayed silence and seeming weakness. The Father did not desert His son; God delivered the ultimate divine verdict by raising Him from the dead!

The angel tells the women to share the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection with His disciples and instructs them to go to Galilee where they will see Him. Indeed, the Good Shepherd is to begin gathering His flock!

Verse 16:8: This verse is where the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark end, with the sudden and abrupt statement: “And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” (The fact that many find this ending unsatisfactory led to the addition of a closing section in later manuscripts.)

However, we can consider what Mark might have meant, by intentionally ending his Gospel with verse 8. Up to this point, the whole Gospel has showed how Jesus fulfilled the promises of God. When something was promised, it was done. Now here, we hear the angel’s promise of what was to come: “He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you” (v.7).

After seeing how Jesus kept God’s promises, it is left to the reader’s faith to answer whether we trust that Jesus would fulfill this promise in what happened next. We who believe trust that Jesus promise does get fulfilled in the future ... even among us!