

**Mark 16:1-8**  
**April 16, '17**  
**Easter**

**“WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?”**

**THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE PLAYOFFS  
STARTED THIS PAST WEEK.**

**DURING THE REGULAR SEASON, I DON'T THINK I  
MISSED MORE THAN A HALF-DOZEN OF THE 82 GAMES  
THE PITTSBURGH PENGUINS PLAYED.**

**BUT I CAN'T WATCH OR LISTEN DURING THE  
PLAYOFFS.**

**I GET TOO NERVOUS.**

**BECAUSE OF THAT, OUR SON DAVID & I HAVE  
DEVELOPED A SYSTEM.**

**I WON'T TELL YOU HOW I COMPLETELY MESSED IT  
UP THIS WEEK, BUT AT THE END OF A PENGUIN  
PLAYOFF GAME, DAVID WILL TEXT ME.**

**IT'LL BE SOMETHING VERY SIMPLE LIKE – “YES” OR PERHAPS “1-SLASH – 16 (1/16)” – INDICATING THEY’VE WON THE FIRST OF THE 16 GAMES IT TAKES TO WIN THE STANLEY CUP.**

**ON THE OTHER HAND, IT MIGHT BE “OUCH” OR “DON’T BOTHER TO WATCH” WHICH, OF COURSE, MEANS THE PENGUINS LOST.**

**WHAT DAVID TELLS ME IS ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW.**

**IF THEY’VE WON, I’LL THEN – WITHOUT ANXIETY – GO BACK & WATCH THE GAME BECAUSE I’LL HAVE RECORDED IT OR I’LL LISTEN TO THE HIGHLIGHTS OR I’LL READ ALL ABOUT IT ON THE PENGUINS WEBSITE.**

**I READILY ADMIT THAT’S A COWARDLY WAY TO FOLLOW MY FAVORITE TEAM & IT’S CLEARLY AN INDICATION THAT I’M PLACING FAR TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE ON SOMETHING THAT REALLY DOESN’T**

**MATTER IN MY LIFE, BUT – TRY AS I MIGHT – I CAN'T  
GET OVER THE ANXIETY.**

**MY POINT IN ALL OF THIS, THOUGH, IS THAT WHAT  
DAVID SENDS ME IN A FEW SIMPLE WORDS IS REALLY  
ALL I NEED TO KNOW.**

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO KNOW  
ANYTHING ELSE?**

**I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO KNOW THE FINAL SCORE.**

**IT COULD HAVE 1-0 OR 8-7 BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS  
– DID THEY WIN OR LOSE?**

**THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.**

**OF COURSE I'LL WANT TO KNOW SOME OF THE  
DETAILS LATER, BUT I'VE ALREADY BEEN TOLD  
WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT AND EVEN IF I NEVER  
LEARN THE DETAILS, THE OUTCOME REMAINS THE  
SAME.**

**ALL OF THAT RELATES TO THIS PASSAGE WE'VE  
JUST READ – MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THE  
RESURRECTION.**

**IT FEELS COMPLETELY UNSATISFACTORY, DOESN'T  
IT?**

**YOU'D MUCH RATHER HEAR MATTHEW'S STORY  
TODAY, COMPLETE WITH EARTHQUAKE & THE  
MEETING OF JESUS BY THE WOMEN.**

**OR MAYBE YOU PREFER LUKE & THE STORY OF  
THE TWO DISCIPLES WHO MET JESUS ON THE ROAD TO  
EMMAUS.**

**AND WHAT ABOUT JOHN'S VERSION – WITH PETER  
& THE OTHER DISCIPLE RUNNING TO THE TOMB & THE  
APPEARANCES IN THE UPPER ROOM & THE ENCOUNTER  
BETWEEN THOMAS & JESUS & EVEN JESUS COOKING  
BREAKFAST FOR THE DISCIPLES ONE MORNING ON THE  
SEA OF GALILEE.**

**NOW *THOSE* ARE THE EASTER STORIES WE WANT  
TO HEAR TODAY, AREN'T THEY?!**

**BUT THIS!?**

**THIS ISN'T AN ENDING!**

**WHAT WAS MARK THINKING – LEAVING US  
HANGING LIKE THIS!?**

**BUT I'M INCLINED TO THINK THAT WHEN WE  
COMPLAIN ABOUT NOT BEING GIVEN MORE DETAILS  
ABOUT WHAT TRANSPIRED THAT MORNING, MARK  
WOULD SAY TO US – “*WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT  
MAKE?!*”**

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF THERE WAS  
AN EARTHQUAKE OR IF MARY MISTOOK JESUS FOR THE  
GARDENER OR PETER & JOHN HAD A FOOTRACE TO  
THE TOMB OR IF JESUS SAW A COUPLE GUYS IN A  
LITTLE VILLAGE LATER THAT NIGHT OR IF HE COOKED**

**BREAKFAST FOR THE DISCIPLES OR INVITED THOMAS  
TO TOUCH HIS WOUNDS A WEEK LATER?**

**THOSE ARE GREAT STORIES & FURTHER EVIDENCE  
OF THE RESURRECTION AND I'M CERTAINLY  
DELIGHTED THAT THE OTHER GOSPEL WRITERS CHOSE  
TO SHARE THEM.**

**BUT, IN THE END, WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT  
MAKE?!**

**MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THE RESURRECTION HAS THE  
ANGEL TELLING US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW –  
*“YOU'RE LOOKING FOR JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHO WAS  
CRUCIFIED. HE HAS BEEN RAISED. HE ISN'T HERE.”***

**OUR NATURAL HUMAN CURIOSITY ISN'T SATISFIED  
WITH THAT KIND OF STRAIGHTFORWARD SIMPLICITY  
THOUGH.**

**THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE OTHER ENDINGS  
ATTACHED IN YOUR BIBLE.**

**SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE OF HISTORY,  
SOMEONE – PROBABLY A MONK IN SOME MONASTERY –  
DECIDED HE'D DO US ALL A FAVOR BY COMPLETING  
MARK'S UNFINISHED GOSPEL.**

**BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE ORIGINAL  
ENDING OF MARK WAS HERE AT VERSE 8.**

**AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE WITH A LITERARY PUZZLE  
LIKE THIS, OVER THE CENTURIES, SCHOLARS HAVE  
PRODUCED THEORY AFTER THEORY TO ACCOUNT FOR  
SUCH AN ABRUPT ENDING.**

**ONE THEORY SAYS THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT  
WAS TORN AND THE REAL ENDING LOST.**

**SOME SAY THAT IT WAS MEANT TO BE FOLLOWED  
IMMEDIATELY BY THE RESURRECTION STORIES OF  
MATTHEW & LUKE.**

**OTHERS SAY THAT A SKEPTIC LIKED THE REST OF THE STORY MARK TELLS BUT COULDN'T ACCEPT THE RESURRECTION & SO HE TOOK IT OUT.**

**THERE IS EVEN A VERY DRAMATIC & FANCIFUL SUGGESTION THAT SAYS MARK WAS WRITING HIS GOSPEL IN PRISON & WAS INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT BY A GUARD WHO CAME TO LEAD HIM TO HIS EXECUTION.**

**ALL OF THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE POSSIBLE – BUT HIGHLY IMPROBABLE.**

**I THINK THE TWO ENDINGS WE ARE GIVEN AS FOOTNOTES IN OUR BIBLES – COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS “THE SHORTER ENDING” & “THE LONGER ENDING” - ARE THE MOST IMPROBABLE OF ALL THE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES.**

**I THINK THE SUGGESTION THAT THE END WAS TORN & LOST FOREVER HOLDS THE GREATEST**



**LIKELIHOOD OF TRUTH IF THE END WE'RE GIVEN ISN'T TRULY THE END.**

**PERSONALLY, I THINK THIS IS IT.**

**I THINK THIS IS PRECISELY THE WAY MARK INTENDED HIS GOSPEL TO END.**

**ONE OF THE REASONS I BELIEVE THIS IS BECAUSE IT FITS WITH THE REST OF HIS GOSPEL – PARTICULARLY ITS BEGINNING.**

**IN THE SAME WAY THAT WE PREFER THE WAY MATTHEW, LUKE & JOHN *END* THEIR GOSPELS, WE ALSO PREFER THE WAY THEY *BEGIN* THEM.**

**THINK ABOUT IT – IN MATTHEW, YOU'VE GOT THE VISIT OF THE ANGEL TO JOSEPH & THE LONG GENEALOGY, TRACING JESUS' BIRTH BACK TO ABRAHAM.**

**LUKE TELLS THE TENDER STORY OF MARY, THE SHEPHERDS & THE ANGELS.**

**AND THEN THERE’S JOHN WHO OFFERS HIS  
PROFOUND THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT REGARDING  
“*THE WORD BECOMING FLESH & DWELLING AMONG US.*”**

**YOU KNOW ALL OF THOSE OTHER GOSPEL  
BEGINNINGS, DON’T YOU?**

**YOU KNOW HOW MATTHEW, LUKE & JOHN BEGIN  
THEIR STORY OF JESUS.**

**BUT – WITHOUT LOOKING – HOW DOES MARK’S  
GOSPEL START?**

**YOU DON’T HAVE A CLUE, DO YOU?**

**THAT’S BECAUSE HIS BEGINNING IS AS  
FORGETTABLE AS HIS ENDING.**

**“*THE BEGINNING OF THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS  
CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.*”**

**THAT’S IT.**

**THERE’S NO POETRY, NO DRAMA.**

**THERE AREN’T EVEN ANY VERBS HERE!**

**ONE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTATOR PUTS IT LIKE THIS – “*MARK GIVES US JUST 13 LITTLE WORDS THAT SOUND MORE LIKE A TITLE THAN AN INTRODUCTION & THEN HE’S OFF TO THE RACES WITH JOHN THE BAPTIST!*”**

**IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THOSE 13 WORDS WERE INTENDED AS THE TITLE OF THE ENTIRE BOOK.**

**THEY REALLY TELL US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW.**

**IT MAKES ME THINK OF A PARTICULAR EVERYDAY PRODUCT THAT DOES EXACTLY THE SAME THING.**

**WHEN A COMPANY CAME UP WITH THEIR OWN VERSION OF A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE TO SOMETHING REALLY TASTY – A PRODUCT THEY CONSIDERED SUPERIOR TO OTHERS LIKE IT -THEY CALLED IT “*I CAN’T BELIEVE IT’S NOT BUTTER!*”**

**THAT’S NOT ONLY THE NAME OF THE PRODUCT –  
IT’S A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU CAN  
EXPECT FROM IT!**

**IT TELLS YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.**

**THAT’S WHAT MARK’S OPENING WORDS ARE – THE  
TITLE OF HIS GOSPEL & A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF  
WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM IT.**

**BUT FURTHER INSPECTION OF THAT TITLE TELLS  
US SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT & IT’S SOMETHING  
THAT CAN, PERHAPS, HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND  
THE REASON THAT MARK ENDS HIS GOSPEL AS HE  
DOES.**

**THE OPENING WORDS – “*THE BEGINNING...*” TELL  
US A GREAT DEAL.**

**WHEN MARK SAYS “*THE BEGINNING OF THE GOOD  
NEWS,*” HE DOESN’T MEAN JUST THIS ONE VERSE –  
MARK 1:1.**

**HE'S TALKING ABOUT HIS WHOLE GOSPEL.**

**ALL 16 CHAPTERS ARE JUST THE BEGINNING OF  
THE GOOD NEWS BECAUSE THE STORY DOESN'T END  
WITH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.**

**IT CONTINUES THROUGH THE AGES – EVEN UP TO  
OUR OWN TIME – EVEN UP TO YOUR OWN LIFE.**

**SO, PERHAPS, WE NEED TO ASK THAT QUESTION  
THAT SERVES AS OUR OWN TITLE THIS MORNING, IN A  
SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FASHION.**

***“WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?”***

**NOT *“WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE”* IN TERMS  
OF THE DETAILS OF THE RESURRECTION, BUT *“WHAT  
DIFFERENCE DOES THE RESURRECTION MAKE IN YOUR  
LIFE?”***

**GO BACK YET AGAIN TO MARK'S ENDING.**

**THE ANGEL WHO APPEARS AS A YOUNG MAN, SAYS  
TO THE WOMEN – “*JESUS IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU TO  
GALILEE.*”**

**WHERE’S GALILEE?**

**IT’S FAR TO THE NORTH OF JERUSALEM.**

**IF YOU RECALL, THAT’S WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.**

**THAT’S WHERE THE DISCIPLES WERE FROM.**

**THAT’S THE PLACE THEY CALLED HOME.**

**THAT’S WHERE JESUS WAS GOING TO MEET THEM –  
IN GALILEE – BACK HOME.**

**THAT’S WHAT MARK IS TRYING TO TELL US HERE.**

**JESUS IS GOING TO MEET US “BACK HOME.”**

**EVEN TODAY – JESUS WILL MEET US “BACK HOME.”**

**AT HOME, THERE MAY BE PILES OF DIRTY DISHES,  
UNMADE BEDS, A YARD OR GARDEN THAT  
DESPERATELY NEEDS TENDING, A HOUSE THAT NEEDS**

**CLEANING, CARS THAT NEED SERVICED & MEALS THAT NEED TO BE PREPARED.**

**THIS WEEK, THE MEDICAL TREATMENTS WILL RESUME, THE TROUBLES AT WORK WILL CONTINUE & THE CHILDREN WILL NEED CONSTANT CARE & ATTENTION.**

**IT CAN BE EASY TO “SEE” THE RISEN CHRIST IN AN UPLIFTING, JOYOUS EASTER WORSHIP SERVICE.**

**IN THE MIDST OF BLOOMING FLOWERS & BLOSSOMING TREES, IT’S NOT HARD TO THINK OF NEW LIFE SPRINGING FORTH FROM DEATH.**

**BUT WHERE IS THE RISEN CHRIST WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THE DRUDGERY & THE STRESS & STRUGGLES OF DAILY LIVING?**

**MARK GIVES US THE ANSWER.**

***“HE HAS GONE AHEAD OF YOU.”***

**HE’S THERE – HE’S THERE IN ALL OF IT.**

**HE'S ALIVE & HE'S WITH YOU & THAT'S THE  
DIFFERENCE THAT RESURRECTION MAKES IN YOUR  
LIFE.**

**YOU'RE NOT ALONE.**

**THE RESURRECTION ASSURES US THAT CHRIST IS  
ALIVE TODAY & HE'S WITH YOU IN EVERY TROUBLE &  
EVERY TRIAL.**

**HE'S AT YOUR SIDE BECAUSE "*THE BEGINNING OF  
THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD*" IS  
STILL BEING TOLD IN YOUR OWN LIFE. AMEN.**

*The Reverend Dr. Dennis R. Davenport  
Eastminster Presbyterian Church  
Evansville, Indiana*