

**“The Fulfillment of Reconciliation Part 2”**  
**Mark 16:1-8**  
**The Confession of 1967 9.55-9.56**  
**Sermon #95**  
**Easter Sunday**  
**56th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
**4.4.21**

**Mark 16:1-8 CEB**

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. 3 They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) 5 Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. 6 But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. 7

Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you.” 8

Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

### **C67 9.55-9.56**

With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.

“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

I think if we're honest with ourselves, another reason the Gospel of Mark is not everyone's favorite, besides the lack of the birth narrative, is that it ends with people being scared at the tomb. Too scared to say a thing to anyone about the Risen LORD. Maybe the

women were afraid at this particular moment because they were in awe. Maybe they were dumbstruck. Yet, the women had to eventually tell someone about Christ's resurrection because if they hadn't, then we wouldn't be celebrating this moment together right now.

I'm not here to cast blame on anyone, especially women in the Bible. They endure a lot already. But, still, this ending is bizarre. It explains why Matthew, Luke, and John develop their endings.

Matthew continues the Resurrection Story with the Great

Commission. Luke continues the story with the encounter at

Emmaus where Jesus shares a meal with two despondent men

before he disappears and before he ascends into heaven. John

develops the plot even further to include multiple encounters of

Jesus over the period of weeks before the book ends.

Yet, in Mark, it is an empty tomb, but people are silent. This also explains why there is an ending added later. But this ending doesn't match Mark's tone.

From the beginning of Mark, we are put right in the middle of the action. Jesus is on the scene in very little time. Over and over again throughout the sixteen chapters we read: "But, and, immediately, suddenly, then". Jesus is baptized. Suddenly, he's driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. Then, he preaches near the Galilee Sea and picks up some new disciples. Immediately, he heals people and casts out demons. And his ministry spreads. That's all in one chapter! The scenes don't linger. They move quickly because God is on the loose.

So, adding this alternate ending starting at 16:9 just doesn't make sense. It's out of character. The ending at 16:8 is *not* out of character. And this ending in verse eight forces us to examine our responsibility in the Kingdom of God that has been named and preached by Jesus throughout Mark's Gospel. Our responsibility within the Kingdom of God that is present with us, right now, and that encompasses all times, places, and people is to share this Good News of Christ's defeat of death through his death and resurrection!

I imagine this urgency was felt by those who created the Confession of 1967. The ball was in this committee's court. They saw a world in turmoil. They saw their denomination struggling with

concerns that, while always present, were not in the forefront of their minds. Ethnicity being one concern and war being another.

Obviously, 1967 was a radically different time than today. Nearly 55 years ago, women were supposed to work solely at home or as teachers and secretaries. Other than that, there was not much available for them to pursue. Cities were in the process of integrating. Vietnam was approaching its height. The Mainline Protestant Church was very much an influential and respected force in society. It was probably at its zenith of power in the United States.

Five and a half decades later, things have changed. Women are in various professions. Segregation is, on paper anyway, illegal.

Vietnam waged on into the 1970s, but it eventually ended. And the Mainline Protestant Church is not the institution it once was.

But, some things haven't changed, or rather, they seem eerily similar to the concerns from 55 years ago. Women are paid less than men. Segregation looks different, but is still with us. Just look at certain neighborhoods and communities. We will commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, which ushered in the ongoing War on Terror. People use weapons of war to commit mass murder around our nation. Most recently these past few weeks in Atlanta, Boulder, and Virginia Beach.

Yet, reading the Resurrection Story from Mark gives us hope. Our Savior isn't dead, but he lives. And because of his death and



resurrection, evil has been and will be destroyed. And with that hope, we can live out our calling as agents of reconciliation.

This calling as agents of reconciliation is confronting the truth of the empty tomb and boldly declaring to the world that the heartache we experience everyday is not final. There is a better way of life as Jesus demonstrated in his ministry. There is a better way of doing things in the here and now. The Kingdom of God is upon us and in the glimpses of the Kingdom of God we see on earth, they overwhelm us in the life after this one.

The authors of C67 put it beautifully in 9.55:

*With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify*

*limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.*

The “hope” this excerpt refers to is the hope that is stirred up in us because of God’s reign here on earth. The reign of God that Jesus preached to the crowds is a rabble rouser and it pokes at the status quo. The Kingdom of God that Jesus continuously said was upon us stirs trouble in us knowing that what we see on a regular basis in this broken world is harmful to each other is not what God desires for us. Indeed God’s Kingdom stirs up hope in us and it forces us to work for a better world. And while we work for a better world where we strive to be reconciled to each other, we look to the final

triumph of God, which is shown to us in our Savior's resurrection, even in the midst of despair.

It's been quite the journey going through highlights of C67. I have certainly enjoyed getting to know it better like I would a friend. The more I have delved into this document the more I am convinced of this one thing that I have shared with some of you during the Season of Lent: It is a love letter to God and a love letter to the world which is the object of God's love. This document is a reminder that God weeps at the current state of affairs in our world. Yet, God loves us so much. C67 is a reminder that the forces of evil do not have the final say, but have been and will be vanishing.

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.*

*Amen.*