

Connect Group Questions

Whodunit? (Mark 16)

1

This is the final sermon in the 16-week series covering the Gospel of Mark.

- Q – How have you found the sermon series to be e.g difficult, enlightening, enduring(!)?
 - Q – If someone asked you to sum up the gospel of Mark, what words/sentences would you use?
 - Q – Ask each member of the group what take-away fact or experience made an impact during the course of the sermons, that made a difference to their lives?
 - Q – How was your image/thinking of Jesus changed, through the sermon/series?
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2

Read Mark 16:1-8

'The Three Mary's at the Tomb' - This name is used for a group of three women who came to the Sepulchre of Jesus. In Eastern Orthodoxy they are among the Myrrh-bearers, a group that traditionally includes a much larger number of people. All four gospels mention women going to the tomb of Jesus, but only **Mark 16:1** mentions the three that this tradition interprets as bearing the name Mary: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, Mary Salome.

The other gospels give various indications about the number and identity of women visiting the tomb:-

John 20:1 mentions only Mary Magdalene, but has her use the plural, saying: "*We do not know where they have laid him*" (John 20:2).

Matthew 28:1 says that Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" went to see the tomb.

Luke 24:10 speaks of Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary of Jacob, and adds "the other women", after stating earlier (Luke 23:55) that at the burial of Jesus "the women who had come with him from Galilee ... saw the tomb and how his body was laid".

The gospel of Mark is often reference as a 'punchy' or 'fast' gospel, as Mark whizzes through the storyline without much detail i.e he doesn't include much of what Jesus actually teaches, unlike the other gospels. The naming of *The Mary's* in Mark's gospel, is one exception of Mark going into detail.

- Q - Why do you suppose Mark takes the trouble to name who the women are?
 - Q - What significance can we place upon this detail for today? (One line of thought may evolve around the significance of women being an active part of Jesus' followers)
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3

Read Mark 16:9-19

The preacher referred to verses 9-19 in the light of a mystery, since some theologians advise that Mark actually finished his book at Ch16 v 8 – this view is supported by the oldest 2 versions of the Bible that exist today, neither of which have v 9-20 in them. However, other scholars point to the many other old versions of the bible, which do have verses 9-20 in them.

- Q – What are the thoughts of the group, in relation to the possible inclusion/absence of verses 9-19?
- Q – How do such mysteries/'controversies' affect the credibility of the gospels, or indeed the Bible, especially to non-believers who may be critical of Christian beliefs?

A quotation was given, by Nicky Gumbel... *'Even believers don't always recognise or fully understand, the Problem, Pollution, Power or Penalty of sin'*

Q – Discuss what such a statement might mean, and whether you agree with it.

Q – Do you think that 'sin' was the exclusive reason for Jesus coming into this world? If it was, how might that affect how we 'gossip the gospel' i.e our evangelism?

Q – How do your unbelieving friends & family members view the church's position that people need 'saving' from their 'sins'? How do you give an answer/explanation to them re the gospel?

Reflection

The sermon used an analogy of a *Whodunit?* mystery to present an alternative view of the gospel story.

Some members of the group may be very self-aware, in terms of their sinfulness, even having accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. The *Whodunit?*'s of sin, self and saviour are acknowledged, nonetheless we still struggle with sin. The apostle John details how God makes a way for believers to confess their sins and be continually renewed, through Jesus death and resurrection.

Ask members of the group to reflect upon who Jesus is to them. After 2-3 minutes of silence, read aloud these verses (1 Jn 1:5-9)... *'This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.'*

Prayer

As the time of reflection draws to a close, you may wish to pray this prayer...

Almighty God, we acknowledge the sins we have within our lives. We recognise and confess our self-centredness, defiance & arrogance – both towards you & others.

We give thanks for the grace, humility & weaknesses that Christ endured in service of others. We thank you for sending him to deliver us from our sins & restoring a righteous relationship with you.

We invite your Holy Spirit to move - to bring healing and restoration among us. Help us to see the beauty, of humility, weakness & brokenness in our own lives, whilst acknowledging you as our strength. Help us to minister to others that struggle with sin and separation from you.

*May Christ be our inspiration, as we seek to minister to those around us, so that His beauty may be reflected upon a world in need of your love, grace & mercy. **AMEN***