

## A New Ending

The Ascension of the Lord – Mark 16:15-20 – May 13, 2018

Historically speaking, the gospel of Mark probably did not end with the story of the ascension. It appears that Mark concluded his gospel at chapter 16 verse 8. There was no encounter with the resurrected Jesus. There was no ascension. In fact, the community of disciples was left trembling and bewildered.

Somewhere in the second century, scripture scholars believe that the community of believers gave this gospel a new ending which added what they thought Mark should have included in his original text. The longer ending, which includes chapter 16: 9-20, was written probably by someone different than Mark. It was the community's attempt to give a new ending, or to complete the story of Jesus, based on the traditions of the other known evangelists. This new ending provides the faithful with a new way of looking at Jesus.

The gospel proclaimed today (Mark 16: 15-20) gives Jesus dominion of all of creation. The ascension of Jesus into heaven ends his earthly life and presence with the disciples. Jesus' new status, **"at the right hand of God"**, opens Jesus to be present to everyone and everything at all times. Jesus' life on earth ended in death. His resurrected life ended in his ascension. His ascension makes Jesus available to all people at all times with dominion over all the earth.

This relationship is so important that Jesus commands that we (his disciples) **"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."** This task of evangelization is to be so assimilated into our very being that even the forces of evil will not deter our work.

**"These signs will accompany those who believe; in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."** These signs seem strange and exaggerated but their meaning is that Jesus is God, and with that truth is the fact that Jesus has dominion over both good and evil in the world.

Jesus has ascended into heaven and has taken his rightful place as Lord of heaven and earth. The new ending proclaimed this week in Mark reassures us that Jesus has conquered death, brought life to the world and has now imbued all of creation with his divine presence.

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler