

From the Pastor:

I remember driving cross country to visit Jeremy's grandparents in Ohio. We had rented several books on tape (now I really am dating myself.) One was a mystery, with just a bit of romance thrown in, by an author I had read before and enjoyed. As we reached the climax of the story, the protagonist was killed, and the heroine was left in the room with the body. That was how it ended. I remember saying to Jeremy, "No, no, no, no ... there's more to the story, this author would not just end it here. Where's the happy ending? I want a happy ending." Several miles down the road I spied a Kmart; we took the exit so that I could go in and buy the book. And, there were indeed two additional chapters in the unabridged version that I then proceeded to read out loud as we continued on our journey.

Or, imagine watching an engaging film. You are on the edge of your seat, caught up in the story. And then it ends. It just ends. Unexpectedly. Awkwardly. What? No, no, no, no! You wonder, What will happen next? It can't just end like this.

Mark's gospel this Easter morning ends more with a whimper than a bang, like a movie that abruptly stops. Three women see a mysterious figure who tells them that Jesus is alive. The women are filled with awe, trembling and joyful at the same time. Then the gospel ends with these words: "They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). (Just in case you've pulled out your bibles to check, you may notice more. Mark's second ending was added much later, because quite simply, the early followers didn't like the ending. So they changed it.)

One of the strange aspects of Mark's ending is that there is no resurrection appearance of Jesus. And this is the point: we do not need a dramatic appearance of our Lord to affirm the resurrection. Instead, for Mark, faith comes through remembering Jesus' words. The mysterious figure in the tomb tells the women to remember Jesus' promise that he is going ahead of them to Galilee. That's where you'll find Jesus, ahead of you, encourag-ing you into a new day.

Resurrection faith springs from remembering Jesus' words of promise, not receiving dramatic visions. During the Easter season, although we have no spectacular, triumphal appearance of the risen Christ, we are given something more profound: God's covenant of life. When we have failed, when the forces of death, hate, and sin have done their worst, then Mark says, Remember the promise our Lord gives you. He is raised to a new life, and you are raised with him. Jesus' words of promise make all the difference for us; they usher us into a future that belongs to God.

Mark's strange, abrupt ending is the beginning of our new life in Christ. The Risen One is our future: creation transformed, death swallowed up, God's love without end. This resurrection movie does not end, but only continues through us and our brothers and sisters throughout the world. God has joined us all to the story, to the living, breathing body of Christ. I just love a good ending

Easter joy!! *Pastor Karen*

