

Closing Prayer

God of undying life,
by your mighty hand
you raised up Jesus from the grave
and appointed him judge of the living and the dead.

Bestow upon those baptized into his death
the power flowing from his resurrection,
that we may proclaim near and far
the pardon and peace you give us.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
first-born from the dead,
who lives with you now and always
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers. Easter Morning*³

CPL • LBC Year B Easter Day.odt • 2021-03-20

³ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

Easter Day

Principal Service readings

Acts 10.34-43

Peter's speech to Cornelius

or Isaiah 25.6-9

The day of the Lord, the day of salvation

Psalm 118.[1-2],14-24]

1 Corinthians 15.1-11

Paul's account of the resurrection

or Acts 10.34-43

John 20.1-18

Disciples find the empty tomb and Mary sees Jesus

or Mark 16.1-8

Women are told about the resurrection at the empty tomb

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Women are told about the resurrection

¹When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Mark 16.1-8 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

Mark 16.1-8 tells how the women discovered Jesus' tomb empty on Easter Sunday morning. They had purchased materials for anointing the body of Jesus at the end of the Sabbath (16.1). The women go to the tomb early on Sunday and are amazed to find it open (16.2-4). As they enter the tomb a 'young man' (*neaniskos*) announces that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and asks the women to tell Jesus' disciples that he is going before them to Galilee (16.5-7). The women are frightened, and they run away without saying anything to anyone (16.8).

In Hosea we read: 'After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live for him' (Hosea 6.2). Jesus has been raised up on 'the third day'. The first day was the Friday before sunset, the second was from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and the third was from Saturday evening to Sunday.

The fact of the empty tomb does not prove anything. The body could have been stolen, or Jesus might not really have died. But for Mark (and other New Testament writers) the explanation given by the 'young man' is the only valid explanation. Jesus Christ, who really died, has been miraculously raised from the dead. What is really distinctive about Christianity is that this happens uniquely to an individual, and within the course of human history, rather than at the end of time. The status of Jesus, the living one, prefigures what happens to all who remain faithful to Jesus teaching and example at the end of time. We should note that there has been a discussion of resurrection in 12.18-27.

The text of Mark seems to break off at verse 8 – 'for they were afraid'. Further endings, found in some manuscripts, are thought to be later additions. The sudden ending at 16.8 has been explained in various ways. (1) Mark may have died or been unable to conclude his gospel; (2) the last page or pages of the gospel have been lost; this is anticipated by references in 14.28 and 16.7 to the forthcoming appearance of Jesus in Galilee; (3) Mark deliberately broke off his gospel at 'for they were afraid'. (Most scholars today embrace the third option.)

Those who support the third option above usually appeal to Mark's skill as a writer, and to his literary genius in leaving the story of Jesus open-ended and so demanding a decision from the reader. We should also

note that in each of the passion predictions (8.31; 9.31; 10.33-34) there has been a reference to the resurrection of Jesus.

To those who know about and believe in Jesus' resurrection Mark is effectively saying: Go back and read again the story of Jesus the wonderful teacher and healer who is the suffering but now vindicated Messiah and Son of God.

Donahue and Harrington (2002), p.460²

Quotations

1

The empty tomb stands, a veritable rock, as an essential element in the evidence for the resurrection. To suggest that it was not in fact empty at all, as some have done, seems to me ridiculous.

Norman Anderson, 1908–1994

2

Christianity, unlike any other religion in the world, begins with catastrophe and defeat. Sunshine religions and psychological inspirations collapse in calamity and wither in adversity. But the Life of the Founder of Christianity, having begun with the Cross, ends with the empty tomb and victory.

Fulton J. Sheen, 1895–1979

Related topics

For further study:

Paschal mystery; resurrection; eucharist; baptism; confirmation; symbols: bread, water, oil; Christian witness

² *The gospel of Mark* / John R. Donahue, Daniel J. Harrington. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2002. – (Sacra pagina; 2). – ISBN-13 978-0-8146-5965-6