

WELWYN TEAM MINISTRY



LENT COURSE 2018

THE PASSION ACCORDING TO MARK



Welwyn Team Ministry – Lent Course 2018 – The Passion according to St Mark

Introduction to the course

Each year the lectionary (list of church bible readings) follows a gospel – this year we follow St Mark. So in the run up to Easter you will hear readings from Mark's (and also John's) gospel. So this course follows through the story as told by Mark. So a few facts about Mark's gospel

- *Written by (probably) John Mark,*
- *65-75AD – therefore often thought the first to be written*
- *Location unknown – traditionally Rome*
- *The Gospel of Mark is by far the shortest of the four Gospels, and is written in a punchy, pithy and fast moving style, designed to be read aloud in church.*

In each session you will find a portion of the Passion narrative as found in Mark. You will want to read this through as a group. There is also some commentary that you might like to refer to. Then there are some questions for discussion. There is also some art, music and poetry that further explore the theme – often there is questions to ask about these as well. It would be good to be able to play the music, and perhaps display the picture. Finally there is a short act of worship to end with. Do feel free to adapt, leave out, change around any of the material so that it works for your group.

Session 1 - Introduction to today's session:

Immediately following the healing of Blind Bartimaeus, at Jericho Jesus and his disciples move to make their way to Jerusalem. He enters on a donkey to a triumphant reception, making his way to the Temple. After retiring to Bethany for the night, he returns to the Temple and turns over the tables of the money changers.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

11When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples²and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

In Mark Jesus arrives for the first time in Jerusalem at this point. In Luke and Matthew there are hints, and in John it is explicit that he has been there before.

Mark is unusually precise – for him – about chronology. It is certainly possible that the events occurred within a week, but they need not. If – as is traditionally assumed – they are gathering for Passover, then Palm Sunday is very early to be thus gathering – 24 – 48 hours would be more usual. More likely this is the Feast of Tabernacles (or possibly Hanukah) when Palm branches were cut and waved at the word 'Hosanna' in a recital of Psalm 118. These festivals are several months before Passover.

The scene in Mark is entitled a 'triumphal entry' – though this description is more low-key than the crowd that acclaims Jesus in Matthew and John.

Two key questions:

- Are they spreading Palm branches and reciting the psalm specifically for Jesus or as part of a festival? Or is it simply a nice coincidence, interpreted with hindsight?
- And can we believe that the crowd will be fickle enough to turn so dramatically in five days? Or maybe that is

'Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry.¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴He said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written,

the point?

It is significant that Jesus enters on a colt – pilgrims traditionally would have been expected to enter the city on foot. So rather than a sign of humility as traditionally thought (with reference to the prophecy of Zech 9:9 – not quoted in Mark, but in Matt)– the riding of anything is in fact a claim of importance.

'Son of David' – here Jesus is acclaimed with this title – notice that in the last verses of chapter 10, blind Bartimaeus calls Jesus by the same title – in other words, it is the blind that see before the crowd.

Bethany (house of the poor) 2 miles.

V2 'never been ridden' – in the Mishnah, no one else can ride a King's horse.

Here the crowd is spreading 'leafy branches' ie not the 'branches' as in John (and Feast of Tabernacles) – more a bed of leaves. Mark's gospel opens with (1:3) 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'

Vs 11 – anti-climatic: he came, he saw, he went away again...!

The cursing of the fig tree is the only 'negative' miracle in the gospels - the irony is that the OT also identified a fruiting fig tree with the coming of the Messianic age. May simply explain a well-known dead fig tree!

'Not the season for figs' = spring = Passover not Tabernacles.

Cleansing of the Temple – John places it near Passover, but several years earlier at the start of Jesus ministry.

What is Jesus objecting to? Unlikely

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations”?

But you have made it a den of robbers.’

¹⁸And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. ¹⁹And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

(and the narrative does not support this) that he is objecting to the whole sacrificial system, which is commanded by the Torah – even the sale of animals is integral to that system. It must therefore be the extortionate way it is practised (though historical studies diverge as to whether it was extortionate). This would place Jesus in the line of the prophets (and others) who criticised corrupt priests who exploited the system, rather than the system itself.

However the prophets – and Jesus – do not restrict their anger to corrupt priests, no anti-clericalism here! – but also at ordinary worshippers who also perform sacrifices without the proper intention. The money-changers traditionally arrived two weeks before Passover (on 1st Nisan)

Both Josiah (2 Kings 23), and Judas Maccabaeus have ‘cleansed’ the Temple in the past. It is not clear whether this action in some way prefigures the subsequent destruction of the Temple.

Vs 16 – ‘to carry anything (=goods) through the Temple’ is forbidden.

Vs 17 – ‘For all nations’ from Isaiah 56:7 – very interestingly Mark is the only gospel to retain this phrase from Isaiah – the other three truncate the quotation.

Questions:

1. Is the crowd that welcomes Jesus the same one that rejects him?
2. Should Jesus learn to be kinder to trees?
3. What is Jesus cleansing the Temple of?

For further reflection:

Music to listen to: Thomas Weelkes:
'Hosanna to the Son of David'
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ2JcN-tgI8

El Greco's 'The Cleansing of the Temple'



This work of about 1570 by El Greco is a tempestuous scene. The cleansing of the Temple became an increasingly popular theme in the Roman Catholic church in response to the challenges of the Reformation.

What strikes you about how El Greco has depicted Christ in this scene?

How has El Greco exaggerated the irreverence of those in the Temple for effect?

Closing Act of Worship:

You may like to read together this sonnet by Malcolm Guite. Is there an image or phrase that particularly stands out to you?

A sonnet for Palm Sunday by Malcolm Guite:

Now to the gate of my
Jerusalem,
The seething holy city of my
heart,
The saviour comes. But will I
welcome him?
Oh crowds of easy feelings
make a start;
They raise their hands, get
caught up in the singing,
And think the battle won. Too
soon they'll find
The challenge, the reversal he
is bringing
Changes their tune. I know
what lies behind
The surface flourish that so
quickly fades;
Self-interest, and fearful
guardedness,
The hardness of the heart, its
barricades,
And at the core, the dreadful
emptiness
Of a perverted temple. Jesus
come
Break my resistance and make
me your home.

You might like to read the passage again slowly, either aloud or silently.

A time of prayer may follow, ending:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now
and for ever. Amen.**

The session concludes with the grace:

**May the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, and the love of
God, and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and
evermore. Amen.**



**Welwyn Team Ministry – Lent Course 2018 –
The Passion according to St Mark
Week 2: Jesus is anointed with oil and the Last
Supper (Mark 14: 1-31)**

Introduction to today's session:

This week we read of Jesus' anointing at Bethany with "very costly ointment". This angers some who are present who know how much the ointment could have been sold for. Jesus tells them that he is to die: "She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial." We also begin to see Jesus' future betrayal unfold: Judas agrees to betray him for a sum of money from the chief priests. One of the most powerful acts of the Christian faith is the sharing of the bread and wine at the Eucharist. Today we will explore the significance of Jesus becoming the Passover lamb in the Upper Room at the Last Supper – that great event which we recall on Maundy Thursday. After departing for the Mount of Olives, Peter's denial is foretold by Jesus, despite his vehement protestations that he will not deny him.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

14 It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; ² for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his

Originally the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread were separate, but now combined and celebrated on 15th Nisan. The lambs were slaughtered on the 14th in the afternoon, but the main Passover celebrations would be that evening, as the Jewish day begins at sunset. Jews counted days differently from Romans (and us). Two days before means the day before (hence Jesus raised on the third day).

What does 'not during the festival' mean, given that as things transpired it did happen during the festival? Do they abandon their delay because of the opportunity provided by Judas' betrayal? Or does it just mean 'not in front of the crowd?'

head. ⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹ When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to

Whilst Matthew's version of the anointing at Bethany is more or less identical, the version in Luke 7 is radically different – indeed it may not even be the same incident. John's account is also different. None of the gospels identify the woman as Mary Magdalene, a tradition that is not found until the 4th century.

It is not all that surprising to pour oil over the head of an important guest at a dinner, but what is unusual Jesus identifying this incident as an anointing for burial. Of course it would be usual to anoint a corpse for burial after death, but in 16:1 this is frustrated by the resurrection. Hence the placement of this story so close to the events of the passion. It was also the case that the coming Messiah would be anointed, so this action has a dual purpose.

It is odd that a leper is holding a dinner party (Simon is never mentioned elsewhere) – maybe he was cured, or caught leprosy after this incident. Nard comes from India. The cost of a jar was about a year's wages! Jars for anointing at burial were often broken and left at the grave.

No motive is given for Judas' betrayal. What is it that he betrays? He does not appear as a witness at the trial. Is it just Jesus' location in the garden?

Clearly unlike John, Mark identifies the Last Upper as a Passover meal. There is much debate over this – although our pattern in Holy Week assumes Mark is correct, there are

eat the Passover?" ¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. ¹⁷ When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" ²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

²² While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it

problems is the arrest, trial and crucifixion being on Nisan 15, the holy day of Passover. Other suggestions have been made – such as Jesus celebrating the Passover a day earlier according to the calendar of the Qumran community – but that is unlikely as Jesus is in Jerusalem not at Qumran. It is commonly said that John has a theological motive for placing the death of Jesus as the hour of the slaughtering of the Passover lambs – but then Mark also has a theological motive in making the Last Supper a Passover meal! Vs 12 does not help in that 'The first day of unleavened bread' = Nisan 15, 'Passover lamb is slaughtered' = Nisan 14, but this may just indicated that he is counting days like the Romans and us, rather than Jews for whom a new day started at sunset.

The coming betrayal does not appear to be a shock to Jesus, though it is to the other disciples. 'Sat at table' = reclining. Supporting the idea of a Passover meal – at no other meal would Jews adopt this posture. The sharing of the bread bowl was a feature of Passover and other Jewish meals, and signified the fellowship of those involved. Mark's account of the last supper is brief. Matthew has a similar account – but they are slightly different from the earliest account we have in 1 Cor 11:23. Luke seems to combine Paul and Mark's versions. 'While they were eating' – if Jesus serves bread at this point, this was a special meal with a 'starter'. 'took

he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴ He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Peter's Denial Foretold

²⁶ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.'

²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." ³⁰ Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹ But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

... blessing brakegave' typical of any meal. However the 'blessing it' is not a helpful translation – it is God who is blessed or praised, not the bread – an important point for Christian understanding of the Eucharist. Probably using the words we now often use before the Eucharistic prayer: 'Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, by this bread ...'

Wine would not have been drunk at ordinary meals, but at special meals only which would have included the Passover. 'Then' – if this is a Passover meal it is likely that in fact the bread would have been near the start of the meal, and the cup would have been the final cup that concluded the celebration. 'Body' = 'soma' in Greek, can mean not just physical body, but 'self' or 'person.' The Passover rite was one of *identification* with their forefathers fleeing at the Exodus – so here in this new Passover it would be natural for participants to identify themselves with Jesus.

'My blood' is more problematic as no Jew would ever drink the blood of an animal let alone that of a human – even as a symbolic understanding, it is deeply shocking. In Paul it seems that it is the sharing in the cup that allows the participants to identify with Jesus, rather than the consumption of blood. The idea of covenant ratified with blood would have been far more easily understood. 'Sung a hymn' – Psalms 114-8 sung at the end of the Passover meal. Quote is from Zechariah 13:7.

Questions:

1. What is the significance of anointing with oil those about to die?
2. What is the Eucharist to us?
3. Are we all like Judas and Peter?

For further reflection:

Music to listen to:

Faure's Requiem – Agnus Dei

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1FKoPO-S2w>

Faure's Requiem is a beautiful setting of the Mass for the dead in Latin. Out of the seven sections, the Agnus Dei is the most phantasmagorical. Its focus is on eternal rest and consolation and is filled with rich, soulful melodies, signifying the glorious song we will be welcomed to in the heavenly Jerusalem.

- Does the music aid us in our journeying with Christ at the Last Supper, and how?
- What is the significance of saying (or singing) the Agnus Dei before our receiving of the sacrament?

Art to explore:

Despite being commonly associated with John's gospel, the phrase 'Lamb of God' is equally as relevant in Mark's gospel given that the Passover meal in the Upper Room occurs on the first day of Unleavened bread when the Passover lamb is sacrificed (v. 12). In the Roman Catholic rite of the Mass, after the breaking of the bread, the priest holds up the host and says: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." This oil painting titled *Agnus Dei* is by Francisco de Zurbarán. It is housed in the [Prado Museum](#) in [Madrid](#), Spain.

- What feelings does this image invoke for you?
- What is the image's significance given our understanding of the Eucharist?



Closing Act of Worship:

You may like to read together this sonnet by Malcolm Guite. Is there an image or phrase that particularly stands out to you?

*A sonnet for Maundy Thursday
by Malcolm Guite:*

Here is the source of every
sacrament,
The all-transforming presence
of the Lord,
Replenishing our every element
Remaking us in his creative
Word.
For here the earth herself gives
bread and wine,
The air delights to bear his
Spirit's speech,
The fire dances where the
candles shine,
The waters cleanse us with His
gentle touch.
And here He shows the full
extent of love
To us whose love is always
incomplete,
In vain we search the heavens
high above,
The God of love is kneeling at
our feet.
Though we betray Him, though
it is the night.
He meets us here and loves us
into light.

You might like to read the sonnet
again slowly, either aloud or
silently.

A time of prayer may follow,
ending:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now
and for ever. Amen.**

The session concludes with the
grace:

**May the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, and the love of
God, and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and
evermore. Amen.**



Welwyn Team Ministry – Lent Course 2018 – The Passion according to St Mark

Week 3: The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Introduction

This week we watch helpless as Jesus is abandoned and betrayed by his friends, bound, beaten and brutally brought to an unfair trial. We see, in this part of the story, the danger of power of religion and state when mixed with the human sinfulness we find in each one of us; self-protection, fear and ego. Chillingly heard as the cries of 'Hosanna!' now turn to 'Crucify him!'

Mark 14:32 – 15:15

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴ And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." ³⁷ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? ³⁸ Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit

Jesus in Gethsemane is undoubtedly an historical incident, though a few confusions suggest that Mark here combines two sources (we have the words of a prayer uttered whilst all witnesses were asleep, Jesus leaves them twice but returns three times). Jesus is not portrayed as serene and composed but disturbed and troubled.

Gethsemane = oil press – note not 'garden of' as in John. Traditional site is lower slopes of mount of olives, eastern side of Kidron valley. Peter, James and John consistently the three disciples closest to Jesus. Vs34 – keep awake, is better translated as the more active 'keep watch' and tunes in better with preceding parables which emphasize the need to keep alert. Vs36 – only time Abba appears in the gospels. Traditionally used of a human father or occasionally a Rabbi.

All gospels agree that those coming to seize Jesus cannot recognise him

indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

⁴³ Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching,

unaided – perhaps we was not as well known as Christians tend to assume. In John the man who attacks is named as Peter.

Vs51-52 – these verses which only appear in Mark, are pretty enigmatic. Why include this little tale? Though perhaps that argues for it simply being an historical reminiscence. Many have argued that this is Mark himself – however this was a follower of Jesus, whereas in Acts we are told that John Mark was not. Perhaps it is a fulfilment of Amos 3:16, or looking forward to the men in white who will announce the resurrection at the end of the gospel.

The trial of Jesus seems to break the rules of a Jewish court, though the only regulations we have in complete form date from a century later. The early church may well have had reason to shift the blame from the Romans, who they are trying to ingratiate themselves with, to the Jews who they are in dispute with. Sanhedrin is a Greek word, and it had 71 members – a reference to the 70 judges appointed by Moses, though a much later creation. After AD70 it was replaced by the Beth Din courts, which are still in existence in this country and many others today. The problem with the trial is that a possible death sentence should be deferred for a day for cogitation and reflection (remember the days begins at sunset) and certainly could not be given during the Festival. A nocturnal trial is also illegal.

vs61 – ironically the first open declaration of Jesus' Messiahship is made by the high priest who will

and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." ⁵⁰ All of them deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, ⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. ⁵⁴ Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹ But even on this point their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" ⁶¹ But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are

immediately reject and condemn him. The high priest is named by Matthew as Caiaphas.

Although Peter follows 'at a distance' he is brave enough to enter into the courtyard and near to the fire (which confirms this is night).

Mark presents the trial as a travesty. A trial on a capital charge should begin with reasons for acquittal, here it begins with those for conviction. The expectation that the Messiah would build a new temple was an established part of Jewish tradition. Vs62 – Jesus' unequivocal reply is surprising given Jesus earlier secrecy.

Tradition holds that the chief witness in a blasphemy trial would repeat the exact words of the accused and that the judges would then rend their garments. It is hard to see hear what amounted to blasphemy – the traditional Jewish punishment for blasphemy was stoning to death. Each of Peter's denials is in turn more serious and ratchets up the dramatic tension. Vs 68 – the first cock crow is omitted in Luke and Matthew and from some manuscripts of Mark.

you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" ⁶² Jesus said, "I am; and

'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,'

and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵ Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. ⁶⁹ And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a

No sentence is given by Pilate, so we may assume that the guilt and the sentence have already been decided in the Sanhedrin, and Pilate is simply the instrument through which that sentence is carried out.

Plainly Mark is taking sides in this: trying to blame the Jews, and exonerate Pilate. Pilate was prefect of Judea 26-36. He was known as a 'merciless and obstinate' man. There is no other record of the tradition of releasing a prisoner at Passover. Ironically it is now Pilate who finally publicly announces to the world that Jesus is 'the King of the Jews' – ironically the charge against him is the truth proclaimed!

Galilean." ⁷¹ But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." ⁷² At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ² Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." ³ Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁷ Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹ Then he answered them, "Do you want me to

release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ They shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

How do you feel hearing Mark's account? What emotions are utmost in your mind – Anger? Disappointment? Guilt? Share some of these thoughts together.

Questions

- * Throughout centuries and still in living memory emphasis of the Jewish authorities involvement in Jesus' arrest and crucifixion have been used as reason for horrific anti-Semitism and persecution. How best do you think these passages should be interpreted today?
- * Why do you think Judas betrayed Jesus? Do you believe he is beyond God's mercy?
- * If you were in the crowd while they were shouting for the release of Barabbas, what would be your cry?

Gerrit van Honthorst *Christ before the High Priest* 1617



“Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ But he was silent and did not answer” Mark 15:60-61

This picture hangs in the National Gallery and gives us an image of haunting power and simplicity. A single candle lights the scene. The High Priest points an accusing finger. The book of law is ready to accuse with the help of the onlookers who have shared their 'alternative facts' and 'fake news'. Yet there is a stark contrast in the expressions of the two main figures. The High Priest tense and animated, and Jesus hands tied, yet calmly free.

- * Where is the real power in this picture?
- * Who in the world holds the power today?
- * Who are those who are unable to speak?

Closing Worship

You may like to read together this sonnet by Malcolm Guite. Is there an image or phrase that particularly stands out to you?

Jesus is condemned to death

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers
Of perception and discrimination, choice,
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,
His consciousness of self, his every sense,
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.
The man who stands there making no defence,
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels
That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.
He gives himself again with all his gifts
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away
A door swings open. This is judgment day.

Read Psalm 27 together – a reminder of God's knowledge of truth and steadfast love in times of false accusation.

**The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?**

**The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?**

**²When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.**

**³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.**

**4 One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.**

**5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.**

**6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.**

**7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!**

**8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, do I seek.**

**9 Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!**

**10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will take me up.**

**11 Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.**

**12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.**

**13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.**

**14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!**

As we've thought of the unfair trial of Christ you may like to close your time together using this prayer from Amnesty International:

Lord Jesus,
you experienced torture and death as a prisoner of conscience.
You were beaten and flogged
and sentenced to an agonizing death
though you had done no wrong.
Be now with prisoners of conscience through out the world.
Be with them in their fear and loneliness,
in the agony of physical and mental torture,
and in the face of execution and death.
Stretch out your hands in power to break their chains.
Be merciful to the oppressor and the torturer,
and place a new heart within them.
Forgive all injustice in our lives,
and transform us to be
instruments of your peace,
for by your wounds we are healed.
Amen.



**Welwyn Team Ministry – Lent Course 2018 –
The Passion according to St Mark
The Crucifixion**

Introduction: “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” These are the only words from the cross that Mark gives. As we begin to enter into them, we will return to the Jewish Scriptures, we will use our imagination to seek insights into that terrible cry. We will ask what does it tell us about where God is in suffering? And about our own experiences of desolation and fear.

Mark 15:16-47

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. ²¹ They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified

The crucifixion is dealt with very swiftly by Mark. Crucifixion was a barbaric punishment used against slaves and the worst form of criminals – latterly used against rebels in particular. Victims were naked, and the torment was expected to last for several days. Mark portrays it as an enthronement (he has had his triumphal entry, his anointing, his proclaiming and his salutation, on the way, as befits a King). Normally prisoners would be required to carry their own cross – in fact the cross beam. It is unusual that Simon is here drafted in. This looks like an historical incident: presumably Mark is inferring that Alexander and Rufus are known to the Christian community. V22 – Golgotha – skull =

him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink,

shape of hill, or = place of Adam's skull.

The church of the Holy Sepulchre is only identified as this site in the fourth century. The Talmud recommends pain killing drugs (wine mixed with myrrh) to be given to those condemned to death, here presumably supplied by woman sympathisers.

V24 – see psalm 22:18.

V25 – third hour (ie 9am). This chronology is at variance with that in John (19:14).

V27 – perhaps James and John are now relieved that their request (to sit on thrones at this left and right) was rejected by Jesus.

Vs 28 is missing! Because it is missing from our oldest manuscripts – it is a quotation from Isaiah 53:12.

Jesus dies alone and desolate – surely the point of the quotation from Psalm 22 in v34 – although some point out that the psalm turns eventually into one of triumph, surely the point here is that Jesus is completely isolated, even those crucified with him taunt him.

V33 – explanations of an eclipse of the sun miss the point of the story here, and indeed are ridiculous because impossible during a festival marked by a full moon. Amos

saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" ⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth,

8:9 prophesies this.

V34 – is the only 'word' (seven sayings of Jesus from the cross recorded across the four gospels) recorded in Mark.

V35 – there are various stories of Elijah coming to help those near death – however it does not work with the Aramaic here (Eloi) but only with the Hebrew (Eli, Eli).

Vs 36 – 'sour wine' – in Psalm 22 it is 'vinegar'.

V38 – 'curtain' – separated Holy of holies from Holy Place, or outer curtain of Holy Place. The former is more likely, and is the place that the High Priest can enter once a year.

Hebrews 9-10 will develop the idea that Jesus enters the Temple and the Holy Place and tears down the walls of separation.

V39 – finally Jesus is recognised by the centurion as God's Son – see long ago 1:1. Only women are left and introduced here ready to play their part in the next part of the story. The list of names varies slightly across the gospels – the way they are referred to may imply that each writer named those from the small crowd familiar to their community.

Jesus is buried – ie his death is complete and a reality.

and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid.	
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Questions:

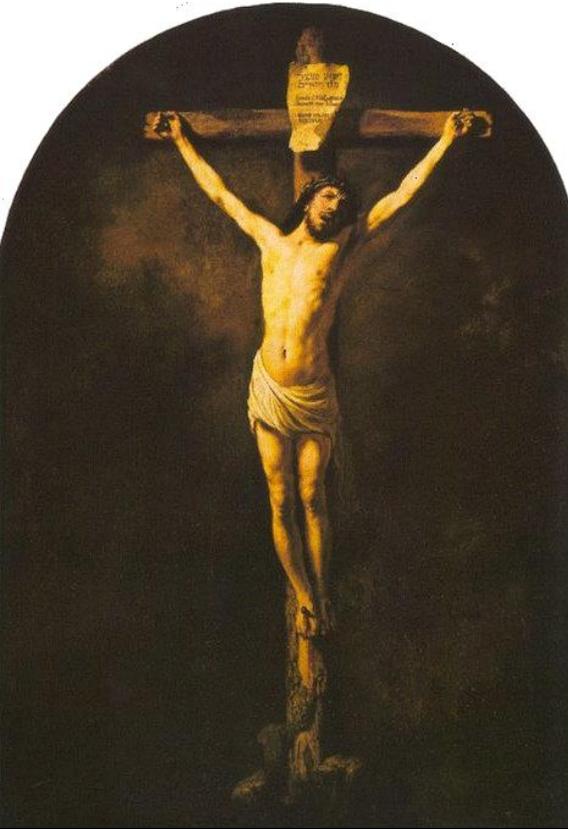
How do you feel hearing Mark's account? What emotions are utmost in your mind – Fear? Sadness? Thankfulness? Share some of these thoughts together.

What insights does it give you?

Does it teach you anything surprising?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Rembrandt's Crucifixion 1631



This picture was only discovered hanging in a small village church in France in the 1950's. Note the use of light and dark. The artist reflects the darkness that fell over the land that Mark mentions - yet Christ, even in his agony and anguish radiates light.

Rembrandt painted this Christ on the Cross a few years before great darkness drew over his own world. His wife and three children were to die and he was to fall into crippling debt. It is curious that critics have observed that Rembrandt has used studies of his own face as the face of Christ in this picture. Perhaps that might remind us how on the cross Jesus holds the suffering of us all.

It what ways, during our Lent course of studying this final week of Christ's life, have you seen Christ take the darkness of the world?

In what times of your own life have you felt a similar despair of being abandoned and God being far away?

For us as Christians, Christ is God: what does God fully entering the darkness and despair of the cross mean for those who suffer in this world?

Closing Worship

You may like to read together this sonnet by Malcolm Guite. Is there an image or phrase that particularly stands out to you?

XI Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross – Malcolm Guite

See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light
We see what love can bear and be and do,
And here our saviour calls us to his side
His love is free, his arms are open wide.

Read together Psalm 139: 1- 18. It reminds us, that even when we feel lost in the grave or surrounded by the dark, God is still with us.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from far away.
³ You search out my path and my lying down,
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O Lord, you know it completely.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is so high that I cannot attain it.
⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
 Or where can I flee from your presence?

- ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
- ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
- ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
- ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
- ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
- ¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
- ¹⁷ How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸ I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Prayer:

This is a prayer I used often during a very difficult period of grief in my family's life. I found it honest and a reminder that dawn follows the dark. I hope it may be a prayer which is useful to some of you too:

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.
For I believe in your deep love and mercy,
in your forgiving understanding of the human heart.
Through lonely watches of the spirit's night
within the narrow tunnel of my grief,
I know a quiet dawn will come.
Tortured alone in the creeping loathsome dark
And dragged along a labyrinthic maze,
I still believe your healing sun
Will bring the birth of some new day
To break the iron gates of pain,
To bring again life, where hopes, broken, lie
Crippled among her ancient battlements;
Lord I believe there will surely be
Light, after the midnight burns to death.
Randle Manwaring



Welwyn Team Ministry – Lent Course 2018 – The Passion according to St Mark

Session 5 – The Empty Tomb

Introduction to today's session:

The oldest puzzle of New Testament scholarship is the fact that Mark leaves us with an empty tomb but no account of the resurrection. The two endings date from the second century and are missing from all early manuscripts. That is not to say that Mark did not believe it – the tomb is empty and the fact of the resurrection permeates earlier chapters of the gospel,

Chapter 16

The Resurrection of Jesus

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was

Various solutions have been suggested to this puzzle, with the arguments for and against.

- Extreme sceptics have therefore cast doubt over the resurrection. However to do so on the strength of the abrupt ending is erroneous. Much of Paul's writings pre-dates Mark's gospel, and we find there records of the resurrection narratives, and indeed the whole content of the letters (see I cor 15) is predicated on the event of Jesus' resurrection. It is more likely therefore that:
- Mark omits an account of the resurrection because it was such a founding assumption of the Christian church. However we are still left with the question of why he omits this obvious climax to his narrative.
- It may be a question of sources – some scholars have detected two different sources behind the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances, both of which are obviously predicated on the fact

crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷ But 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.' ⁸ So 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.

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

⁹ [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

of resurrection. Mark may have possessed a copy of the empty tomb source, but not the source that contained details of the resurrection appearances.

- The abrupt nature of the ending (particularly in the greek, where it ends with a conjunction 'for' (*gar*)) suggests a lost ending which predates even our earliest manuscripts. However other scholars have found equally abrupt endings in other classical documents, including some which end with the word *gar*.
- Something happened to the author (maybe the martyrdom which he predicts following Jesus' disciples) which meant that he was not able to finish his work.

However the ending as we have it still raises several questions: if the only witnesses of the empty tomb were women, who we are told 'told no-one' (and as women anyway their testimony would not have been accepted), how did the story eventually get out, and furthermore what about the promise left hanging in mid-air: 'You will see him in Galilee.'

Odd that the women named in vs 1 are different from those mentioned in the previous (15:47) verse – perhaps a 'join' of sources here. Mary Magdalene is the constant.

It is odd to bring spices for Jesus body – and possibly un pleasant – after 36 hours. Only Luke goes with Mark in this, Matthew realises and adapts his version. Clearly however it is a sign that they

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

¹² After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.¹³ And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

¹⁴ Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵ And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ¹⁶ The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will

expect to encounter a corpse.

The phrasing in verse 2 is odd, as the first clause implies before sunrise (as other gospels testify).

The young man in verse 5 is identified in other gospels as an angel – given the women's reaction and other texts that refer to angels as young men, this is not as big a discrepancy as it seems. The NRSV translates well here: He has been raised – an example of the divine passive, ie he has not raised himself, God has raised him. The women are incidentally not simply surprised, they are terrified.

The message is to Jesus' disciples *and Peter* – and sign that Peter is currently in disgrace and not to be numbered amongst the 12. The going to Galilee has been predicted by Jesus in 14:28. Why are they directed back to Galilee? There is only one brief resurrection appearance in Matthew in Galilee (28:16) and one in John, clearly added as a supplement. Some argue that Mark was writing for a Galilean community who had their own account of a resurrection experience on home territory, but there is little other evidence for this. Maybe it is simply to account for the known fact that the disciples did return to Galilee. Why are the women silent? Perhaps an ultimate irony of Mark – Mark's gospel has been all about people not understanding, not knowing – and the women have come out better than the rest: perhaps Mark is saying that the climax of all this, is that even the most reliable of his supporters fail him at the last, through fear.

SHORT ENDING: This rounds off the

recover.'

The Ascension of Jesus

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.]

gospel, but leaves two problems: no resurrection appearances, and they directly contradict the verse that has just come before it – namely that they said nothing to anyone.

LONGER ENDING: dating from the start of the second century (quoted elsewhere by 140). It has three brief resurrection appearances but does not counter the two other problems at the end of the gospel, namely the silence of the women, and the return to Galilee. Some of the material here may be dependent on Luke 24. The final commission is similar to that in Matthew 28. The brief account of the Ascension is like that of Acts 1:1. Here the disciples are rehabilitated and sent out from what we can assume (in accordance with other accounts) was Jerusalem. Still the Galilee puzzle is not resolved.

Questions:

1. Does the abrupt ending of Mark matter?
2. Which 'solution' to the puzzle do you prefer?
3. Is it worth reading or thinking about the shorter or longer endings, knowing as we do that they are not genuine?

For further reflection:

Music to listen to: This joyful Eastertide:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tipsbcfuB4



The Empty Tomb is the culmination of Ghislaine Howard's *Stations of the Cross* series which was made for Liverpool Anglican Cathedral in 2000 and has been touring British cathedrals since, returning to Liverpool every two years.

Does the painting remind you of anything?

(Spoiler answer: Ghislaine based it on studies of rough sleepers outside Liverpool's two cathedrals)

Closing Act of Worship:

You may like to read together this sonnet by Malcolm Guite. Is there an image or phrase that particularly stands out to you?

*A sonnet for Palm Sunday by
Malcolm Guite:*

*He blesses every love which
weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who
stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or
leave her love's
Last touching place, but
watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound
behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong
through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus
through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener
standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle
question 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or
sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes
out her reply
'They took my love away, my
day is night'
And then she hears her name,
she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night,
and ours, to Day.*

You might like to read the passage again slowly, either aloud or silently.

A time of prayer may follow, ending:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now
and for ever. Amen.**

The session concludes with the grace:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, and the love of God, and
the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit
be with us all, now and
evermore. Amen.**

