

by

Didymus

Evensong readings:-

Ps.96

Isaiah ch.60, vv1-14

Rev ch.3, vv1-13

Gospel: Mark ch.16, vv9-16



The Gospel for this week is the end of Mark's Gospel, dealing with the Resurrection of Jesus. In fact there are two endings, neither written by Mark. The earliest copies finished at V.8. Whether the Gospel was unfinished when Mark died in 68AD, or was lost, is unknown. The reading is believed to be a second century addition in order to complete the Gospel story, influenced by the Gospels of Luke and John. So one may conclude that it tells us nothing that is not in the other Gospels. There is also a summary ending with is attached together with last Sunday's study of John Mark.

The reading that seems to capture the feeling of the moment is the psalm, 96, as we edge our way slowly back to the life that we once lived. It was only just over a year ago that our lives were first circumscribed by the threat of the CV19 virus, but it seems far, far longer. And our lives are still circumscribed, but less so thanks to brilliant and caring people. Psalm 96, like 98 (*Cantate Domino*) calls us to celebrate the glory of God and his loving generosity. Perhaps exult rather than celebrate. This group of psalms was written as if from a King, and this psalm suggests an enthronement, celebrating the greatness of the most high, and urges believers to take the good news out to all, reflecting the Great Commission of Matthew ch.28. It is a joyous, loving and exultant psalm, and I'm sure those are qualities that we need now. There are problems and dangers enough in this world, and a psalm spiritually uplifting is what we need. Even if it was written 3000 years ago, the sentiments are the same.

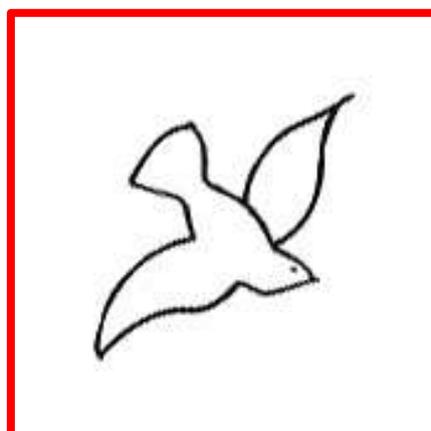
But when we look at a world restless with evil and suffering, we wonder what there is to sing and dance about. The military adventures of China with many of its people confined in mind if not body, a madman in north Korea, Russia making military mischief at a cost to its people, Burma ransomed by an ambitious military, the cockpit of hatred and death in the Middle East, and the poison of fanaticism loose in Africa - I could go on. What have we done, or allowed others to do with the freedom, love and glorious Creation that God gave us?

Mark told us in his seventh chapter (KJV):

And Jesus saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him.

Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

There is so much to pray about, but it is the minds of humankind that need changing.



Mark 16:8 Some manuscripts have the following ending between verses 8 and 9, and one manuscript has it after verse 8 (omitting verses 9-20):

Then they quickly reported all these instructions to those around Peter. After this, Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.

St.Mark (Evensong 22/4/21)

On Monday we remember St. Mark, the author of the first Gospel to be established in writing. His name was John Mark, and it is entirely understandable that the John was dropped since there were so many. In Hebrew John meant "*God has been gracious*". It is thought by most biblical scholars to have been written in the mid-60s AD. It is based to a certain extent on the reminiscences and teaching of Peter, a matter which is still argued over among the experts. His Gospel was taken almost completely into Matthew's, completed some 15 years later, and substantially by Luke, whose Gospel was completed in about the same time. It seems very unlikely that John was unaware of the other Gospels when his was completed 40 years later.

The timescale of Mark depends very much on who one believes. He appeared to be in several places at once if you put different the various accounts of his life together. As mentioned earlier, John Mark is thought to have met Peter on the latter's journey to Rome. Written notes were used in those times. Mark's Gospel is the shortest, and its 16th chapter was completed by another. It reads as if with breathless haste, to get as much relevant information down as quickly as possible. One can understand that: there must have been so much to record for posterity before memories faded and detail was lost.

John Mark is thought to have been born in 5AD in Israel and his mother Mary was thought to be a Christian who supported Jesus and his Disciples. If we dig into the genealogical undergrowth of the NT, we find that Mark was related to Barnabas as a cousin. He was thought to be the young man in his Gospel who fled from the Garden of Gethsemane. Mark would have been in a position to know of course, but at 25 he was hardly a boy.

Between 30 and 46AD, or after 50 AD he was a companion to Peter, and is said to have travelled to Alexandria around 43 AD. Mark accompanied as a sort of junior companion to Paul on his first journey in 46 to 49 AD, with Barnabas. He left Paul after Cyprus as a result of a disagreement, and returned to Cyprus with Barnabas.

He went back to Alexandria after Cyprus and founded the church there. He later became the first bishop of Alexandria. He died there in 68AD, possibly martyred, and is celebrated there. His remains were kept in Alexandria, but were stolen in 828 and taken to Venice where he is also remembered. His emblem was and still is the winged lion.

He was not one of the twelve Disciples but possibly one of the seventy sent out in around 29AD. He was not commissioned as was Luke, but Mark led the way in his record of the life of Jesus Christ.

His Gospel is very much the cornerstone of the Gospels and NT and we are greatly in his debt.