

Take-Home Sheet | Session 14

Torn: The Centurion's Confession and the Empty Tomb (Mark 15:16-16:20)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

The soldiers staged a fake coronation and performed a real one: purple, crown, homage, acclamation, every mocking word true. At Golgotha the seats "at his right and at his left in your glory" (10:37) were finally filled, by two crucified robbers: his glory was the cross all along. In the darkness he prayed Psalm 22, the psalm being enacted around him line by line (the wagging heads, the divided garments), the psalm that ends not in dereliction but in the ends of the earth turning to the LORD and deliverance proclaimed "to a people yet unborn", to us. The Father never stopped loving the Son (CCC 603); the Son carried our estrangement all the way down, so that whoever turns to him in any darkness is never beyond his saving presence: he has prayed our worst prayer from the inside.

Then the two sentences the whole Gospel was built toward. "The curtain of the temple was TORN in two, from top to bottom", *schizo*, the verb used exactly twice in Mark: heavens torn at the baptism, veil torn at the death, each answered by a declaration of sonship. Torn from God's side, and never to be neatly shut: the new and living way opened through the curtain, that is, through his flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20). And then a Roman centurion, a Gentile, the officer of the execution, standing FACING him, seeing only how he died, became the first human being in this Gospel to say it: "*Truly this man was the Son of God!*" The sealed guesses opened, and the Secret's logic stood complete: the title waited fourteen chapters for the one place it could not be misread. You cannot know who Jesus is apart from the cross; and once you have seen him there, you say it out loud.

At dawn: the stone rolled back, "He has risen, he is not here," and the tenderest two words in the Easter message: "go, tell his disciples AND PETER", the denier retrieved by name, the Galilee reunion Jesus booked before anyone fell (14:28) kept to the letter. We handled Mark's ending with the Church's honesty: the oldest manuscripts stop at 16:8, and the Church receives the Gospel entire, "with all its parts" as the Council of Trent declared, so the longer ending stands as canonical, inspired Scripture; and if 16:8 was Mark's last line, the women's silence hands the reader the pen, you know the story, so the ending is yours to speak. The longer ending seals it: "he sat down at the right hand of God" (Psalm 110 cashed), "and they went forth and preached everywhere." Every lamp on the stand.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Leo the Great (Sermons on the Passion of the Lord)

Creation confessed what the priests denied: the sun withdrew, the earth trembled, and the veil was torn asunder as the former cultic figures found their fulfillment. What was veiled for one nation was torn open for all, and the Church has loved to add: the centurion's confession is the nations already walking through the breach.

Voices of the Church: Pope St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 21)

Had the angel not summoned him by name, the man who remembered the cockcrow would never have dared to come among the disciples again. He is called expressly, lest he despair: mercy does not merely leave the door open for the one who failed worst; it goes out and calls him by name.

Voices of the Church: St. Augustine (Expositions of the Psalms, Psalm 120)

It is no great thing to believe that Christ died; pagans and enemies believe that much. The faith of Christians is the resurrection of Christ, and Christ risen is the head whose rising is the pledge of the body's: what happened to him on the third day is what he intends for everyone the Father has given him.

Live It This Week (and After)

- Finish Mark's sentence: tell one person, plainly, what you found in this Gospel. "How much the Lord has done for you" is still the whole job description.
- Read the Gospel of Mark whole, in one sitting, this month, about ninety minutes. You will hear every thread you now know, and it will feel like rereading a letter from someone you have come to love.
- Take the centurion's post once this week: fifteen minutes before a crucifix, facing him, saying only his sentence. Nothing now stands between you.
- If a cockcrow in your past still keeps you from the room, hear yourself named in 16:7 and go to Confession. Galilee is scheduled; he got there first.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39, RSV2CE)

Where to Go From Here

You have now walked the fastest, fiercest Gospel from the torn heavens to the torn veil. Three natural next steps: pray with the Sunday Gospels (Mark returns every Year B, and you will hear it differently forever); take up one of the longer Gospels with the same inductive eyes, watching for each evangelist's own threads; and keep the study's four verbs, took, blessed, broke, gave, as your weekly appointment: everything this Gospel taught you converges at the altar.

Catechism References

CCC 603, 638-644, 648, 651-655