

The disciples and Peter (Mark 16:1-8)

There is a chasm between Peter and Jesus that cannot be glossed over.

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Sometimes it's the small things you notice. You wouldn't think so on Easter Day, but there you go. There are two small words in Mark's account that I didn't notice for a long time. They are right there in verse 7: "and Peter." Go tell his disciples and Peter. No other Gospel records the words in quite this way.

And then one year I was leading a confirmation retreat. The theme was Holy Week. We began with a Palm Sunday parade, continued with a foot-washing for Maundy Thursday, and then held a mock trial of Jesus. We had witnesses for the defense and for the prosecution; we had defense attorneys and prosecuting attorneys. Everyone studied and knew their role. I still remember one young woman, in the moment, blurting out, "I wonder how this is going to come out?"

Then, at the last minute, Peter changed his testimony. "I never knew the guy!" Peter said. The defense attorneys looked at each other with shock. They had not expected that.

The next morning we read all of the stories of the resurrection, side by side. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We looked at the similarities and differences: how many women, how many angels, whether Jesus appeared or not.

We were fresh from the trial the night before, and those two words stuck out, "and Peter."

It's an acknowledgement of estrangement and failure. Peter is apparently not included in the group "the disciples." He failed, turned his back on his friend. There is this chasm between Peter and Jesus, and between Peter and the other disciples, that cannot be glossed over. Something happened, and Peter is not exactly one of the disciples anymore.

But he is called by name.

Easter is the great feast of the resurrection. It is the day that Jesus rose and God overturned death. I close my eyes and think of Isaiah's great vision of the mountain and the feast of rich foods, and of all the nations that will gather. On that mountain God will destroy the shroud that is death. He will destroy death forever.

But the word that sticks out for me is "disgrace"—that he will take away our disgrace. And that makes me think of Peter again, and how being restored to community was a kind of resurrection for him, too. Jesus called his name and took away his disgrace and wiped away the tears from his eyes. I can't help but think of the old gospel song, "Will the Circle be Unbroken?"

It will, because Jesus conquered death. But also because Jesus called Peter's name. The feast on the mountain is for Peter too, and for you and me. At the end of time, and now.

The resurrection of Jesus is our resurrection. Insert your own name. "Go tell his disciples and _____ that he is going ahead of you."