

Mark 16:1-8

16:1 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.

16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

16:3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

16:4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

16:6 But 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.

16:7 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."

16:8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

**Easter Sermon: Mark 16:1-8**  
**The Gospel according to Salome**  
*Rev. Sharon Smith*

Objective:

- The Spirit gives courage to those who follow him when they need it most.
- The way of Jesus is to choose the weak to shame the strong.
- When the moment comes, words will be given to you.

My friends Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed!  
Please be seated.

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Me too!

There was a time in my life when it felt like I had no or little voice.

You too?

Whether you are a woman, a black man living in a white world, transgender or however you identify... most of us have had that awful feeling of having our voice suppressed.

A time of being dismissed,  
Not given a chance to speak,  
Of being called names,  
Moulded into other people's stereotypes with no window of escape.

This sermon is for you. This sermon is for us.

The Gospel according to Salome.  
Her name means 'peaceful'.

She is one of the women...  
...who was faithful to Jesus to the very end.  
And as Saint Teresa of Calcutta said:

'God does not require that we be successful only that we be faithful.'

Though Salome was marginalized, voiceless, and often afraid.

Today I would like to give her voice. And allow her testimony to give us courage.

Hear, if you will. The Gospel according to Salome, told by Sharon Smith informed by the Gospel according to Mark.

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**Scene 1:**

We stood on the foothills of a rocky outcrop. Outside the city walls.

This was a Passover I had never expected. For the angel of death had not passed over us this year.

Quite the contrary.

Last night, they had taken our Lord, our friend, our leader, Mary's boy.

And there he hung, nearly dead.

Oh, the shame of it all. So many Jewish families had travelled to Jerusalem for the Pesach Feast and now *this* in full view of everyone.

A moment full of shame.

Especially for Mary. She had always stood tall whenever her son was teaching in the temple, on the street or on the hillside.

Oi, what would they say now?

I felt exposed, violated, lost, confused, mocked, alone.

Last night's Pesach meal had long digested,

we had been standing outside from 9am in the morning until late in the afternoon.

I was empty and numb.

**Scene 2:**

As the sun set, it was closing in on our Sabbath day. I had this urge to do something.

But what?

I turned to the others and said: "Remember the Sabbath day when Jesus broke custom? He got close to that man's shrivelled hand and made it whole".

It was Sabbath again.

And something had to be done.

I had always followed, done what I was told. I didn't know how to do anything different.

I was frustrated at my own stupidity.

I looked around.

There were few of Jesus' friends left at the execution.

We last saw Peter during the trial.

Who would help us? The least we could do was give Jesus a poor-man's burial.

Did anyone I know have a cloth and a pallet?

As the sky turned orangy, pink: Mary, Mary & I began to pray a traditional Sabbath day prayer:  
***Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the light of the Sabbath.***

Light... it felt like the darkest of nights.

Suddenly, there was movement at the cross, we strained our eyes and saw the soldiers lowering Jesus. He must be dead, I thought. No hope for anything now. But next to them was Council Member Joseph from Arimathea. He held strips of linen and a bottle of myrrh and aloe.

“Where are they taking him?” We muttered to each other. The Mary’s left their belongings with me, and quickly followed at a distance, not to be seen.

### **Scene 3:**

Sabbath was long and hushed, my panic would rise and fall.  
 I was beyond tears...  
 And only felt the internal tremors of my painful heart.  
 And the shameful thoughts in my harassed mind.

I needed Jesus.

**He had shared with me the secrets of life and love. (Mark 4:11-34; 12:28-34)**

**He had given words to pain and fear. (Mark 14: 34,38)**

I had not learnt to do this.

I barely recognized my own needs. I had always followed. Done what I was told.

I didn’t know that I could think for myself.

How do people give voice to the images that form in their mind?

I had no idea.

Mary, Mary and I huddled together on the floor at home.

Mary Magdalene sobbed.

**And her tears brought images of the night Lazarus’ sister had poured her expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet. That night he had told us that he would die. (Mark 14:1-9)**

Jesus had prepared us for this. And look at us.

Again, I felt a pang of shame for my panic, fear and pathetic passivity.

And then it happened.

Words began to form in my mind.

I stood up.

“How much money do you have left?”

I interrupted the silence.

Their faces were surprised.

“How much money do you have left?”

We took our money pouches – and spread out the denarii.  
It would be enough I thought.

And we waited and waited.

The sun eventually began to set. Sabbath was over...  
And the three of us wrapped up, so as not to be identified.  
We moved briskly toward the market.

These spices would be our final gift.  
A mixture of sadness and relief filled me.  
We had a plan. Well kind of.  
It was just the stone (in front of the tomb) that might get in our way.

#### **Scene 4:**

At sun rise, we wrapped up again and headed out.  
This time Mary led the way. She retraced her steps from the night before.  
I felt brave for the first time.

We entered a garden and I saw the hewn rock. Mary pointed.  
My heart was beating faster now...  
I unwrapped the cloth that held the spices.  
Mary gasped.  
I looked up.

The stone had been rolled away.

My courage grew and grew. I felt empowered.  
We stepped forward. Ready to execute our plan.  
We can do this. We are doing this.

All I could hear was my heart thumping in my ear.

The sweetness of the spices filled the small space as I opened up the costly parcel.  
Mary gripped my arm. I looked up. My bravery and courage turned to shock.  
My legs were weak. My hand dropped the spices on the ground.

‘Do not be alarmed’ A young man said.

We looked around the enclosure. The body was nowhere to be seen.  
I wondered if Mary had shown us to the right place.

But then the man said - Jesus had been raised and we would see him in Galilee.  
Tell the others.

I didn't hear much after that. Suddenly the strength returned to my legs.  
And the voice in my head said: Get out!

I ran as fast as my legs could carry me.

**Scene 5:**

We found ourselves huddled on the floor at home. Just as before.

Mary Magdalene sobbing.

I was trembling uncontrollably.

A great fog had descended over me.

All I could think of was how stupid I had been to even come up with the spice-plan in the first place.

Mary poured us some warm water with honey.

And I began to calm down.

As we sipped the sweet liquid,  
we remembered Jesus words:

**Do you bring in a lamp and put it under a bed? (Mark 4:21)**

**Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness how can you make it salty again? (Mark 9:50)**

**Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. (Mark 10:31)**

And then it happened.

Words began to form in my mind.

I stood up.

"Who, should we tell first?"

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May the words and presence of the resurrected Christ,  
Give us deep courage in the face of our fear.

Amen.