

Mark: 16:2–8

From Catena Aurea:

1. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

GLOSS. (ord. ex Bedâ.) For these religious women after the burial of the Lord, as long as it was lawful to work, that is, up to sunset, prepared ointment, as Luke says. (Luke 23:56) And because they could not finish their work from the shortness of the time, when the sabbath was over, that is, at sunset, as soon as the time for working came round again, they hastened to buy spices, as Mark says, that they might go in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus. Neither could they come to the sepulchre on the evening of the sabbath, for night prevented them. Wherefore it goes on: And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

SEVERIANUS. (occ. ap. **Chrysologum**, serm. 82) The women in this place run abroad with womanly devotion, for they do not bring Him faith as though He were alive, but ointments as to one dead; and they prepare the service of their grief for Him as buried, not the joys of heavenly triumph for Him as risen.

THEOPHYLACT. For they do not understand the greatness and dignity of the wisdom of Christ. But they came according to the custom of the Jews to anoint the body of Christ, that it might remain sweet-smelling, and might not burst forth into moisture, for spices have the property of drying up, and absorb the moisture of the body, so that they keep the body from corruption.

AUGUSTINE. (Con. Evang. iii. 24) What Luke expresses by very early in the morning, and John by early when it was yet dark, Mark must be understood to mean, when he says, very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, that is, when the sky was growing bright in the east, as is usual in places near the rising sun; for this is the light which we call the dawning. Therefore there is no discrepancy with the report which says, while it was yet dark. For when the day is dawning, the remains of darkness lessen in proportion as the light grows brighter; and we must not take the words very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, to mean that the sun himself was seen upon the earth, but as expressing the near approach of the sun into those parts, that is, when his rising begins to light up the sky.

THEOPHYLACT. He says, On the first of the sabbaths, (μῆς σαββάτων.) that is, on the first of the days of the week. For the days of the week are called sabbaths, and by the word 'una' is meant 'prima.'

SEVERIANUS. (**Chrysologus** ubi sup.) Your breast was darkened, your eyes shut, and therefore ye did not before see the glory of the opened sepulchre. It goes on: And they looked, and saw that the stone was rolled away.

SEVERIANUS. (**Chrysologus** ubi sup.) Great indeed by its office rather than its size, for it can shut in and throw open the body of the Lord.

THEOPHYLACT. Though Matthew says that the Angel was sitting on the stone, whilst Mark relates that the women entering into the sepulchre saw a young man sitting, yet we need not wonder, for they afterwards saw sitting within the sepulchre the same Angel as sat without on the stone.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Either let us suppose that Matthew was silent about that Angel, whom they saw on entering, whilst Mark said nothing of him, whom they saw outside sitting on the stone, so that they saw two and heard severally from two, the things which the Angels said concerning Jesus; or we must understand by entering into the sepulchre, their coming within some inclosure, by which it is probable

that the place was surrounded a little space before the stone, by the cutting out of which the burial place had been made, so that they saw sitting on the right hand in that space him whom Matthew designates as sitting on the stone.

THEOPHYLACT. But some say the women mentioned by Matthew were different from those in Mark. But Mary Magdalene was with all parties, from her burning zeal and ardent love.

SEVERIANUS. (*Chrysologus* ubi sup.) The women, then, entered the sepulchre, that being buried with Christ, they might rise again from the tomb with Christ. They see the young man, that is, they see the time of the Resurrection, for the Resurrection has no old age, and the period, in which man knows neither birth nor death, admits of no decay, and requires no increase. Wherefore what they saw was a young man, not an old man, nor an infant, but the age of joy.

SEVERIANUS. (*Chrysologus* ubi sup.) Again, they saw a young man sitting on the right, because the Resurrection has nothing sinister in it. They also see him dressed in a long white robe; that robe is not from mortal fleece, but of living virtue, blazing with heavenly light, not of an earthly dye, as saith the Prophet, Thou deckest thyself with light as with a garment; and of the just it is said, Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun. (Ps. 104:2) (Matt. 13:43)

THEOPHYLACT. For he does not blush at the Cross, for in it is the salvation of men, and the beginning of the Blessed.

THEOPHYLACT. As if he had said, Do ye wish to be certain of His resurrection, he adds, Behold the place where they laid him. This too was the reason why he had rolled away the stone, that he might shew the the place.

AUGUSTINE. (Con. Evan. iii. 25) By saying, He will go before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you, he seems to imply, that Jesus would not shew Himself to His disciples after His resurrection except in Galilee, which shewing of Himself Mark himself has not² mentioned. For that which He has related, Early the first day of the week he appeared to Mary Magdalene, and after that to two of them as they walked and went into the country, we know took place in Jerusalem, on the very day of the resurrection; then he comes to His last manifestation, which we know was on the Mount of Olives, not far from Jerusalem. Mark therefore never relates the fulfilment of that which was foretold by the Angel; but Matthew does not mention any place at all, where the disciples saw the Lord after He arose, except Galilee, according to the Angel's prophecy. But since it is not set down when this happened, whether first,

before He was seen any where else, and since the very place where Matthew says that He went into Galilee to the mountain, does not explain the day, or the order of the narration, Matthew does not oppose the account of the others, but assists in explaining and receiving them. But nevertheless since the Lord was not first to shew Himself there, but sent word that He was to be seen in Galilee, where He was seen subsequently, it makes every faithful Christian on the look out, to find out in what mysterious sense it may be understood.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) It is also signified that the grace of Christ is about to pass over from the people of Israel to the Gentiles, by whom the Apostles would never have been received when they preached, if the Lord had not gone before them and prepared a way in their hearts; and this is what is meant by, He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, that is, there shall ye find His members. There follows: And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed.

THEOPHYLACT. That is, they trembled because of the vision of Angels, and were amazed because of the resurrection.

SEVERIANUS. (**Chrysologus** ubi sup.) The Angel indeed sits on the sepulchre, the women fly from it; he, on account of his heavenly substance, is confident, they are troubled because of their earthly frame. He who cannot die, cannot fear the tomb, but the women both fear from what was then done, and still, as being mortals, fear the sepulchre as mortals are wont.

THEOPHYLACT. Either on account of the Jews, or else they said nothing because the fear of the vision prevented them.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. iii. 24.) We may however enquire how Mark can say this, when Matthew says, they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word, (Matt. 28:8) unless we understand it to mean, that they did not dare to say a word to any of the Angels themselves, that is, to answer the words which they had spoken to them; or else to the guards whom they saw lying there; for that joy of which Matthew speaks is not inconsistent with the fear which Mark mentions. For we ought to have understood that both feelings were in their minds, even though Matthew had not mentioned the fear. But since he has also said that they came out with fear and great joy, he does not allow room for any question to be raised.

SEVERIANUS. (**Chrysologus** ubi sup.) It is said also in a marked manner, that they said nothing to any one, because it is the part of women to hear, and not to speak, to learn, not to teach.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

16:2a Very Early on the First Day of the Week

The Dawn.

Augustine: All the Gospels refer to the period when the heavens were just beginning to brighten in the east. This, of course, does not take place until the sunrise is at hand. For it is the brightness which is diffused by the rising sun that is familiarly designated by the name of the dawn. Mark does not contradict the other Evangelist who uses the phrase, "When it was yet dark." For as the day breaks, what remains of the darkness passes away just in proportion as the sun continues to rise. *Harmony of the Gospels* 3.24.65.

16:2b They Went to the Tomb

16:3 Who Will Roll Away the Stone for Us?

The Door of the Heart.

Peter Chrysologus: Is it from the door of the sepulcher, or of your own hearts? From the tomb, or from your own eyes? You whose heart is shut, whose eyes are closed, are unable to discover the glory of the open grave. Pour then your oil, if you wish to see that glory, not on the body of the Lord, but on the eyes of your hearts. By the light of faith you will then see that which through the deficiency of faith now lies hidden in darkness. *Sermon* 82.

16:4 The Stone Was Rolled Back

The Stone Could Not Hold Him.

Prudentius.

Neither the stone nor the bolts of the tomb could hold Christ a captive;

Death lies conquered by him, he has trampled on hell's fiery chasm.

With him a throng of saints ascended to heavenly regions,

And to many he showed himself, letting them see and touch him. Scenes from Sacred History 43, The Sepulcher of Christ.

16:5a Entering the Tomb

Whether Two Angels or One.

Augustine: Mark tells us that the women entered the sepulcher, and there saw a young man sitting on the right side, covered with a long white garment, and that they were frightened. In Matthew's version, the stone was already rolled away from the sepulcher and the angel was sitting upon it. The explanation may be that Matthew has simply said nothing about the angel whom they saw when they entered into the sepulcher, and that Mark has said nothing about the one whom they saw sitting outside upon the stone. In this way they would have seen two angels, and have assumed two separate angelic reports. Harmony of the Gospels 3.24.63.

16:5b They Saw a Young Man

16:5c Sitting on the Right Side, Dressed in a White Robe

16:6a You Seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who Was Crucified

The Tree as Sign.

John of Damascus: When we worship the likeness of the priceless and life-giving cross, we know that it is made out of a tree. We are not honoring the tree as such (God forbid), but the likeness as a symbol of Christ. For he said to his disciples, admonishing them, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven," meaning the cross. And so also the angel of the resurrection said to the woman, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified." And the apostle said, "We preach Christ crucified." For there are many named Jesus and many who may claim to be the Christ, but we worship the one crucified. He does not say pierced but crucified. It behooves us, then, to worship the sign of Christ. For wherever the sign may be, there also will he be. But it does not behoove us to worship the material of which the image of the cross is composed, even though it is gold or precious stones. The Orthodox Faith 4.11.

16:6b He Has Risen

The Death of Death.

Augustine: He died, but he vanquished death; in himself he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself and he vanquished it, as a mighty hunter he captured and slew the lion. Where is death? Seek it in Christ, for it exists no longer; but it did exist and now it is dead. O life, O death of death! Be of good heart; it will die in us, also. What has taken place in our head will take place in his members; death will die in us also. But when? At the end of the world, at the resurrection of the dead in which we believe and concerning which we do not doubt. Sermon 233.3-4

His Resurrection Recapitulated in Our Baptism.

Basil of Seleucia: Christ descended into hell to liberate its captives. In one instant he destroyed all record of our ancient debt incurred under the law, in order to lead us to heaven where there is no death but only eternal life and righteousness. By the baptism which you, the newly enlightened, have just received, you now share in these blessings. Your initiation into the life of grace is the pledge of your resurrection. Your baptism is the promise of the life of heaven. By your immersion you imitated the burial of the Lord, but when you came out of the water you were conscious only of the reality of the resurrection.... The grace of the Spirit works in a mysterious way in the font, and the outward appearance must not obscure the wonder of it. Although water serves as the instrument, it is grace which gives rebirth. Grace transforms all who are placed in the font as the seed is transformed in the womb. It refashions all who go down into the water as metal is recast in a furnace. It reveals to them the mysteries of immortality; it seals them with the pledge of resurrection. These wonderful mysteries are symbolized for you, the newly enlightened, even in the garments you wear. See how you are clothed in the outward signs of these blessings. The radiant brightness of your robe stands for incorruptibility. The white band encircling your head like a diadem proclaims your liberty. In your hand you hold the sign of your victory over the devil. Christ is showing you that you have risen from the dead. He does this now in a symbolic way, but soon he will reveal the full reality if we keep the garment of faith undefiled and do not let sin extinguish the lamp of grace. If we preserve the crown of the Spirit, the Lord will call from heaven in a voice of tremendous majesty, yet full of tenderness: Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you since the beginning of the world. To him be glory and power for ever, through endless ages, amen. Easter Homily.