

Don't put a period where God puts a comma

Mark 16:1-8

Did you catch that?

Ok then. Let's say you and your daughter have a moment, she gets angry, you raise your voice, she stomps out of the room and the next thing you hear is her door closing.

You go on with the business of the evening. You are preparing the family meal. Your husband comes in and joins you in the kitchen. You know Junior is watching TV, you see the younger two in the yard from the kitchen

window and of course Mary is still in her room. Your husband starts heading into the dining room with the peas and the salad, you are trailing behind with the country fired steak. You turn to Junior---and say "Tell everyone dinner is ready, and Mary too."

Why Mary too? Is she not included in "everyone."

"Go tell his disciples and Peter too." Is Peter not a disciple?

Why single Peter out?

All the disciples were having a rough time and no one had showed themselves to be particularly courageous. But Peter, well his week was really bad.

On the night Jesus was taken into custody, Jesus warned Peter that he would deny he even knew Christ. Peter chastised the Lord and said that would never



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happen. Later that evening Peter went with Jesus to the garden. While Jesus was praying, Peter fell asleep. Then when he was startled he woke up and cut off the ear of a temple guard. After he calmed down he went to where they were holding Jesus in custody. Attempting to stay warm by the fire a woman noticed him or his accent and said, "Aren't you traveling with the Nazarene?" Peter quickly said, "you must have me confused with someone else."

To make matters worse Peter was pressured about his association with Jesus twice more and each time he denied knowing him. Each time, as the pressure was turned up, Peter grew louder and more agitated. He ended up cursing. Then Peter remembered Jesus had warned him this would happen.

Your mother told you not to throw the ball in the house. Now the lamp is broken. She was correct. Your dad told you the roads were most dangerous when they were a little wet. You didn't believe him. But he was correct. It feels bad to have done the act but what compounds the problem is that you were warned. Peter feels bad enough denying Jesus three times, but he was warned as well.

Peter ends up doing exactly what he pledged NOT to do. The last time we saw Peter he was weeping. Heartbroken, ashamed, confused wondering what will happen now, now that Jesus is dead.

In the light of all this it would be natural for Peter to be locked in his room, away from the rest of the disciples. Hiding out. Peter may have believed that because he could not stand with Jesus in the hour of testing he was not welcome to join the others. Peter was too embarrassed in light of his behavior which is probably why the Easter angel said, "Go tell the disciples that the risen Lord is waiting for them in Galilee" and yes "tell Peter too." If hiding out was Peter's way of saying

he was ashamed, inviting him by name was God's way of saying no matter how big of a screw up you are, I am not finished with you, Peter. In the greatest of ironies, Peter is summoned, like the angry daughter in her room, because in this family we don't exile, give you the silent treatment, or leave you in your room, we welcome.

Now if you have your life all together, if you've never done on Monday what you promised you would not do on Sunday, if you have never proclaimed a value only to trade it in later because you were weak or tired, then this sermon is not for you. But if you have ever known the deep shame that comes with failure and disappointment then "tell Peter too" may be the best Easter news you have heard. It's only three words but it's an eternal truth. Easter says loudly God is not finished, even when you think God is finished, God is not done. Even if you have tossed dirt on the grave beware God is not finished. Even if you fell asleep when Jesus needed you the most, cut off someone's ear, and denied you even knew Jesus, God is not finished with you.

God may rest, God may re-group, but God is not finished. When Jesus died on Friday afternoon as far as anyone could see, it was over. Who can blame anyone for coming to this conclusion. It's the rational reaction.

Do not mistake no movement with God's absence. Do not put a period where God is putting a comma. God had more to do.

Yogi Berra is one of those folks that when you quote him people over 55 know what's coming and those under 55 are saying, "A mother named their child, Yogi?" Nevertheless there was a man named Yogi and at times he said peculiar sentences that have become the most unusual quotes, sometimes non-sense

other times profound and many times both at the same time. Google his quotes after the service, you'll be glad you did. He once said, "It ain't over til it's over." Which is wildly obvious. Yet the new life found in Jesus adds even more to the quote, "Even when it's over it ain't over."

Jesus appearance to his disciples and the announcement that the God of all hope will never abandon us is good news. Further Jesus appearance to Peter is God shouting that even if we abandon him, God will continue to call our name.

The Easter God is never finished or done-----with anyone. This is the truth which is born from three little words, "tell Peter too."

Tell Peter too is a sign of hope. A sign that no matter how poorly we have chosen. No matter how long we have walked away from God. No matter how miserable we have failed, God is not finished. God does not send us to bed without dinner. God calls us for dinner even when we deserve to be stuck in our room. Even if everyone who knows us considers us a lost cause, God does not. The Easter God specializes in the lost cause.

Just ask Peter. One minute, he's swearing like a sailor, screaming at the moon, beating his chest, and drowning in regret and shame. Next thing you know they are naming churches, cathedrals, and basilicas and two books of the Bible after him. Which is precisely the sort of thing the Easter God specializes in surprises.

*Do not be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth,
who was crucified, he has been raised;
he is not here. Surprise.*