



# JESUS IS RAISED UP

KATHLEEN RUSHTON discusses Mark's story of the resurrection of Jesus in Mark 16:1-8.

**M**ark wrote to offer hope to people who suffer and fail. Jesus is presented as alone and abandoned. His disciples do not get it. Mark, therefore, is assuring his households that Jesus, who “has been raised,” (MK 16:6) is not only risen among them but also raises them – and us today.

The “household” (*oikos*) operates at three levels. First, in Palestine during the time of Jesus, a household with an extended family was the basic social unit which gave identity, community, protection, status, well-being and honour. Jesus forms the new household of God where all are welcome including lepers, sinners and outcasts. The second level, 40 years

later in the Roman Empire, is the new household of God where Christians gathered for worship in large houses. And the third level is now. We are to reflect, discern and apply the gospel message of the first two levels to our life in our households.

## Mark Tells of the Death-Resurrection

The tomb is open. The women expect to enter into the world of death. However, a young man explains to them they are to enter into another world. They grapple with this new world, a new creation. We read that “He has been raised” after Jesus is identified as the one “who was crucified” (Mk 16:6). Jesus has been raised but he does not cease to be “the Crucified One”.

The mystery of death-resurrection is integrally connected in Jesus and in our lives because a Gospel has two concerns. It is both an interpretative

narrative of the life and death-resurrection of Jesus *and* an invitation to embrace the significance of that story for how we live in this world.

## Jesus Has Been Raised Up

The timing of “the sun had risen” gives the first glimpse that the darkness surrounding the death of Jesus (Mk 15:33) is finally overcome. The women’s concern is the heavy stone. Their being unable to roll it back symbolises the utter powerless of humanity before death. Then they “look up” – a biblical image for recognising God’s action. They see that the stone is already rolled back. God has entered the story: “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised ...”

The verb “raise” (*egeiro*), which here hints that a more-than-human force has been at work and describes God’s answer to Jesus’s suffering, is a keyword in Mark’s households.

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Several characters are raised up, healed and minister.

### Jesus Raised Her Up

In the first household, the first character “raised up” is a woman. Jesus “raised up” the mother-in-law of Peter (Mk 1:29-31). Bibles stating that she then “served/waited on” obscure the Greek word *diakoneo* meaning “to minister”. Like the woman, angels minister to Jesus in Mk 1:13. Jesus says: “I came not to be ministered to but to minister” (Mk 10:45). Minister also describes what the women did (Mk 15:41), although translations say “provided for/looked after” him.

*Diakoneo* was a term for ministry in the early Church. Women exemplify this ministry (Mk 15:41; Lk 10:40; Jn 12:2). Their ministry frames Mark’s Gospel (Mk 1:31; 15:41). Women’s ministry in early Christianity is in continuity with Judaism. For example, there is evidence of Jewish women who were synagogue leaders. The obscuring of these foremothers’ ministry by confining them to kitchens and “women’s roles” needs to be exposed in order to “raise up” and recover women’s ministry in the Church today.

### Jesus Raised Up the Marginalised

Mark tells of three marginalised persons who are “raised up”. Sickness and deformity brought shame and exclusion from the community. In Mk 2:9, 11, 12 friends lower a man who is paralysed into a household. Jesus “raised up” him and sent him “to his own household”. In the synagogue on the Sabbath there was a man with a withered hand (Mk 3:1-6). Jesus takes the initiative: “Be raised up” (Mk 3:3). Bartimaeus, who was blind, sat by the wayside calling to Jesus. Those nearby call out: “Take heart, be raised up, he is calling for you” (Mk 10:49). Jesus declares that his faith has made him well. And Bartimaeus follows Jesus “on the way”.

### People Are Overcome with Amazement

Jesus takes the hand of the daughter of the synagogue official saying: “... be raised up” (Mk 5:41). People are “overcome with amazement (*ekstasis*).” A related word is used by “those

close to” Jesus who thought he was “out of his mind” (Mk 3:21). The women at the tomb (Mk 16:8) are out of their minds. They experience a shock of transition as they undergo a transforming experience. *Ekstasis* carries the sense that God is creating something new (Gen 2:21; 15:12). It is the root of the English word “ecstasy”, which means literally “out of a normal state of being”. The word translated as “afraid” (Mk 16:8; 4:41; 9:6) has the sense of awe. The people are overwhelmed with reverence before divine mystery.

### Continued Raising Up

How are we called to reflect, discern and apply the gospel message of raising up, healing and ministering in our households? A place to begin is with prayer where we become aware of God who is aware of us. Christ continually raises us, heals us and missions us.

During the Easter season we could read the whole of Mark’s Gospel aloud. When we read aloud we tell ourselves the story – the story of Jesus’s words and actions provoking amazement and giving energy to raise up, heal and minister.

Hearing this story, we can also be “overcome with amazement”, because death-resurrection is a transforming, reoccurring experience for us. We experience through our lives big death-resurrections, like the loss of a loved one, as well as little death-resurrections, like the collapse of plans. We take these

experiences with us each time we walk over our doorstep into our wider households of family, work, school, parish, neighbourhood, among the marginalised – to raise up, heal and minister. We have been assured that Jesus “will go ahead” of us (Mk 16:7).

At times, we cannot rely on our own strength, like the person who was paralysed and unable to approach Jesus. We need others to carry us, and sometimes we may carry another away from spiritual darkness, confusion and weariness, towards Christ. We are raised up by Christ, healed and sent in mission to our “own households”.

Both ecology and economy, (derived from *oikos*), call us to be to raised up, healed and ministered to by Earth, our common home – to live aware of its beauty and how it provides for us. In turn, we reciprocate by raising up, healing and ministering to Earth, our common home. “Ecology” (German *ökologie* from Greek *oikos*) reminds us of our relationships with the household of interconnected ecosystems. And “economy” (Latin from Greek *oikonomia*) calls us to work for interconnected systems of well-being. Interconnecting, we go “into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). ✠✠

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