

Sermon May 10, 2026

Diego Garrido

Mary Magdalene

Mark 16:1-11

Hola. This is your ministerial intern, Diego. Join me first in this prayer:

God of love, I trust in you. May my words speak like the courage of the women who went to the tomb. May we, as a community, receive a message of belovedness for each of our endings. May we hear what we were meant to hear, and share after, what we hold as important. May I speak true to myself and to what my congregation holds at the bottom end of our hearts.

Amen.

1. We Don't Like Sad Endings

The scripture said: “Do not be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn't here.” The translations define this figure as a young man clothed in white, not an angel, speaking to these women. And while he says, “Do not be alarmed,” the women continue to be alarmed.

And this is how the Gospel of Mark ends. Or... is it?

Did you know that the ending many Christians know today was most likely added later?

The earliest manuscripts do not include the passages about Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene, or appearing to the disciples, or the so-called Great Commission. For centuries, Christians have understood the Gospel of Mark with an addition attached to it. I even checked the King James Bible.

And I think I know why.

We don't like sad endings. We do not like silence or uncertainty. We do not like empty tombs. We want an after. An after-party. An explanation. A resolution. We want Jesus to appear again quickly so that we do not have to remain inside the fear of these women.

But Mark leaves us there. With trembling. With astonishment. And maybe most of our spiritual lives are hidden inside this controversy. Because after every ending, we desperately want additions to our lives.

2. The Women at the Tomb

The Oxford Bible Commentary reminds us that in Mark's gospel, women often do what the male disciples fail to do. At least the women did not abandon Jesus completely.

When Jesus died, the women watched from afar. And then they still went to the tomb. Women were watching where he was placed... Join me for a second, let us imagine them walking, on dusty roads, after the crowds were gone, after the temple cloth fell and darkness invaded the city. I see them exhausted.

I imagine them preparing food for the fearful disciples, hiding in the house. Making some bread to share, maybe getting water from the well. I imagine them watching the windows, just in case. I imagine Mary Magdalene holding the hand of Mary, the mother of Jesus and the other Mary. I imagine them singing softly to one another in Arameic. Holding grief together. Holding until Sabbath is over to go to see him.

Do you see them as clearly as I do? These women loved him. These women followed him. These women came back. And they arrive carrying spices for a body they believe is still there.

The gospel of Mark works ironically here. Because they are preparing to care for a dead body... but the body is no longer there.

And then the young man tells them: "Do not be afraid." But they leave afraid. He tells them: "Go tell the disciples and Peter." But the gospel says they say nothing to

anyone. And I think that this honesty makes me love this gospel even more than the additions.

Because fear, silence and confusion are real. They are part of our nature.

3. Why Galilee Matters

Then the young man, clothed in white, tells them:
“He is going ahead of you to Galilee.”

Why Galilee?

Because Galilee is where it all began.

Galilee is where Jesus preached that the kingdom of God had come near, where women followed him and cared for him, where gentiles were welcomed, and where ordinary people were healed. Pay attention to the beginning of the gospel of Mark: Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee.

While Jerusalem is empire, religion, and execution, Galilee is the seed of the kingdom.

And maybe resurrection is to go back to our own Galilees.

Back to the Galilee of our ordinary places. Back to the Galilee of your community. Back to your unfinished ministries. Back outside of Jerusalem to where you are needed the most.

Because resurrection is not about escaping life, back to heaven. For us Unitarians, it is to go back to the empty tomb.

4. My Own Ending

Community, this is my last sermon as your ministerial intern before my ordination. If you prayed for me, I am deeply thankful. If you don't pray, that is fine, your presence here is already a sign of God's hope.

That does not mean I am leaving this church. And it does not mean the work ends here. It simply means I am standing between an ending as a disciple and an unknown beginning as a minister.

And maybe that is why I love this gospel so much. Because Mark feels incomplete.

There is fear. There is silence. There is uncertainty. And still... the story continues. I see my migration story in this passage, in the empty tomb, in the silence of the women and the uncertainty of this nation.

Mary Magdalene eventually must have spoken.

Because somehow we are here.

Somehow the good news survived time.

Somehow love continued moving from generation after generation, living seeking thee, from heart to heart.

And maybe ministry, and migration, is that. Doing what we can, while what we can. Trusting that God is the most present when we cannot fully see the ending.

5. Mary Magdalene and Us

Dear women of Chestnut Hill, mothers and caregivers: Be not afraid. You carry something of Mary Magdalene within you. Be not afraid to be your own selves. Be not afraid to talk to the fearful disciples and bring your ideas. Be not afraid to care for one another while our future is unknown. Our resistance is made of care, after the empty tomb.

Mary Magdalene stands between the ending of the gospel and the beginning of a proclamation. She tells the others that Jesus lives. And they struggle to believe her. But she speaks anyway.

And perhaps that is what discipleship really is. Not certainty or perfectionism. Not having every answer. But testimony. Your story. The flame you have passed to your children.

Testimony to say: "He is not where we thought he was." And my Unitarian response is: We are ok with it. We don't need Discovery Channel to find out in an hour-long documentary.

And honestly... I no longer care about proving where Jesus physically is. I just want to go after him, in Galilee.

Because Jesus is in those who choose belovedness rather than judgement. Every time you challenge your fear with love. When despite uncertainty, an invitation for a free lemonade or a cookie becomes a sign of our resurrection. Every time two or three are gathered, even if the rock of the tomb feels heavy, defeated, Jesus was there in that emptiness.

And so the invitation of this gospel is not a triumph. It is courage. Unfeignedly courage. Inditing courage. A color courageous one. A tradition we have received, yes, from women.

This is my final prayer for this sermon:

Dear God, let us not be afraid.

Let us become the mothers and godmothers of the congregants that soon will sign their membership book as we keep together the flame of this tradition alive.

Let us pray to gain the courage to end what we need to end, the serenity to accept what has ended and the wisdom to see what is never ending in ourselves.

Let us do what we can, while we can.

Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Almighty God, beloved of all mercies, we thine sons and daughters do give thee most warm and joyful thanks for all thy generous goodness and loving sweetness to us and to all who call you Father and Mother. We bless thee for our creation, recreation, and all the surprises you continue to show us in this life; but above all, for thine hidden joys in the translation of a better world by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of those who gave us life, and for the hope that we heal, before glory, what was hurt. And we beseech thee, give us that poetic sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be inditing, overflowingly thankful, and that we may show forth thy motherly love, not only with flowers or cards, but on the day after mother's day, by giving up our fears to thy service, and by seeking before thee in faithfulness and gratefulness for all those who will see through us, Jesus Christ, our Lord; in whose motherly name we ascribe all care and presence, world of our word and word of worlds.

Amen.

Blessing

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

Or

You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor
You are my Lord and with me still
You are my love, keep me from ill
You are the light, the truth, the way
You are my Saviour this very day.

(celtic oral tradition - 1st millennium)