

(Alleluia) "Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, Had a wife and couldn't keep her; He put her in a pumpkin shell And there he kept her very well."

Isn't that awful? Mother Goose wrote that in praise of some overbearing vegetarian husband who curtailed his wife's freedoms by imprisoning her in the very garbage of his own addictions.

Try this one: "Georgie Porgie, puddin' and pie, Kissed the girls and made them cry. When the boys came out to play, Georgie Porgie ran away."

Flagrant, unpunished sexual harrassment enshrined in poetry, easily memorized and retold from one generation to another. It makes you wonder what people were thinking when they wrote these things. We could write much better endings. "Georgie Porgie, puddin' and pie, kissed the girls and made them cry. When the girls agreed to sue, Georgie Porgie cried too." "Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a wife and couldn't keep her; he put her in a pumpkin shell, died of ptomaine and went to. . ." (Alleluia)

Finish reading Mark's Gospel and you'll get the same urge to rewrite the ending. Just when the story gets exciting, Mark pulls a fast one. He leads you to expect the women will provide the happy ending. They were with Jesus in his ministry; they were with him at the cross; they go to the tomb. They're the first to see the open grave, the first to see the empty tomb, the first to hear the news: "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has been raised!" Then they get the most awesome commission women have ever received the history of the world: "Tell the disciples Jesus is going ahead to Galilee--you'll see him there!" So, the ending you expect is, the women found the disciples, told them the news, and Jesus appeared, making mincemeat out of Georgie Porgie and crowning them all with glory. (Alleluia) But that's not the ending. Let me read it for you again: "The women went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The end. That ending so shocked the early church that fifty years after Mark wrote it, they added the ending you expect to hear--except for the part about Georgie Porgie.

Why did Mark end it this way? I think he knew exactly what he was doing. He has convinced the reader that Jesus is the Son of God and shocked the reader saying that the most faithful disciples of all, the women, clammed up about the resurrection. Mark has done a clever thing: He places the burden of telling the good news on the reader. To finish the gospel, he's made us part of the story. Now we become a living gospel for all to hear. Mark has tossed Easter to us like a football. Catch it and run, he says. Wherever there is bad news, bring the good news. Wherever there's an unhappy ending, rewrite it. Wherever there is sadness, let there be joy. Christ is risen! (Alleluia!)