

He Has Risen!

Mark 16:1-8

Justin Deeter – November 26, 2017



Last Sunday, we witnessed the death of Jesus at his horrific crucifixion. Before the mocking crowd, we saw his sufferings. As Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross, our sin was nailed along with it. As Jesus hung in the place of sinners, he takes on the punishment of human sin. He endures the wrath of God as he's forsaken by his Father. Jesus suffered before jeering scoffers, yet he died with dignity, so much so that the hardened Roman Centurion concluded, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Yes! He truly was the Son of God! The body of Jesus was hurriedly placed in the tomb because of the upcoming Sabbath. To seal the tomb shut, a large stone was rolled against the entrance of the tomb.

However, the story doesn't end there! On Sunday, Jesus resurrected from the grave! This is the source of all our hope, that Jesus is alive. I pray that resurrection glory would seep into our skin this morning. Without the resurrection of Christ, there would be no forgiveness of sins, no eternal life, no church, no hope! However, Christ has been raised! The resurrection ruptures reality. It demolishes the despair of death. In light of this miraculous event, there is only one fitting response—trembling fear that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As we finish out the Gospel of Mark today, I pray that we would live our lives in holy fear over just who this Jesus is that we have gathered to worship this morning!

Brief Overview of the Long Ending

Before we dive into the text, you may have noticed that I plan to stop in verse 8. As your Bible probably indicates in the editorial notes, there is much debate about the legitimacy of verses 9-20. Most scholars agree that this last part of the book of Mark most likely wasn't original to Mark's writing, as the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of Mark's Gospel doesn't include the longer ending. Though we can't know for sure, it's most likely that this longer ending to Mark was written in the second century. Because it was most likely not included in Mark's original Gospel, I do not plan to cover it.

One of the reasons Mark 16:9-20 was most likely added by later generations of Christians is because Mark's Gospel ends so abruptly. In fact, we don't ever get to see the resurrected Christ! In fact, the book ends quite awkwardly grammatically with the phrase "for they were afraid." Why does the book end this way? Well some have suggested that the Gospel was never finished, and Mark wasn't able to complete it. Others believe that the original ending of Mark is lost and we don't know what it was. Still others believe, that this is how Mark intended to end his Gospel. The debate is complicated and best left to textual scholars far more knowledgeable than I. I won't elaborate on the debate any further than this. I believe the Gospel ends by Mark's intention at verse 8 "for they were afraid." Mark intentionally leaves the Gospel on a cliff hanger, because we are left to respond with what we will do with this earth shattering news that Christ is risen. Even though none of us have ever seen with our own eye Christ risen and alive, we've received the good news handed down to us and we believe. Like the women we must respond to this news with trembling fear and amazing astonishment, ready to herald the good news of Christ's resurrection to the world!

But, I get ahead of myself, let's listen to God's word together. In Mark 16:1-8 we first, grieve over death. Second, we hope in resurrection. Third, we respond with trembling.

1. Grieve over Death (v. 1-3)

After Jesus' death, his followers were in shambles. After all, they had left all they had to follow Jesus and saw him teach with authority and heal with power. They had placed all their hopes in him, hoping he was the Messiah. Imagine the grief and heartache his followers experienced at his death! Just a few days ago, Jesus entered into the city with joyous hosannas. Now, his mangled body was laid in the tomb. Jesus' demise seemed to happen so fast. There was no time to say goodbye. He was there then he was gone.

We observe this grief displayed in the three women who went to the tomb on that Sunday morning. The Sabbath had passed, and they felt the need to do something. So Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome took up spices to go anoint Jesus' body. They woke up early at sun rise to go to the tomb. The trip to the tomb that morning was a bit spontaneous, as they didn't think through who would roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. When your grieving you don't necessarily think through all the details, however they had to do something. They couldn't just sit in the emptiness of their sorrow. So they took to action to go anoint Jesus' body figuring out how to roll away the stone when they get there. Little did they know that the Lord himself would roll away the stone!

Grief is a bizarre emotion, isn't it? It crushes like anxiety, yet it's void and empty. Your heart becomes brittle and cracked like the scattered pieces of egg shell after the yoke's drained dry. Grief sits heavy upon your chest, like a anvil crushing your rib cage; yet, at the same time, you feel light and airy, like a hot air balloon floating above life in apathetic distance, unable to reengage with the life you once knew.

C. S. Lewis experienced the perplexities of grief when his wife died of cancer. He journaled his grief which ended up being published as a book called *A Grief Observed*. It's a heartbreaking and cynical read, where his emotions are raw and sharp. As those who've bene through grief can tell you, you often think things while grieving your ashamed of thinking of later, yet the complaint and anger towards God ends up resolving into a humbled and contrite whisper of praise. Lewis described grief like this,

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing.... And grief still feels like fear. Perhaps more strictly, like suspense. Or like waiting; just hanging about waiting for something to happen.

Death can be debilitating. There is nothing more paralyzing than standing over the corpse of a dead loved one. The sting of death distresses the soul when the brevity of life berates your heart. In our own ways, we've felt the heartache of these women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with oil.

Death is our great enemy, a certain foe that we all will one day face. In the throng of death, humanity is stripped of our self-reliance. No matter our medical invention and scientific advancement, we cannot stop aging. Though we may be able to extend lives, we cannot stop death. Death is always a tragedy. It reminds us of the broken world that we live in and the consequences wrought by sinful humanity. It is appropriate and fitting to grieve at the loss of life. As we weep over those we've lost, we remind ourselves of our desperate need for Christ to come and to die.

The tragedy of Christ's death stirred a type of fear in these three grief-struck ladies. However, little did they know that hope awaited at the tomb!

2. Hope in Resurrection (v. 4-7)

When they arrived, they noticed, strangely, that the tomb was already opened. The stone had been rolled back! Sheepishly, they entered into the tomb and they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in white. The sight of the angelical messenger startled the mourners, however the angel's message startled them even more. The angel announced, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell this disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

The angelical messenger brought glorious news to those women! Jesus was crucified, but no longer. He has risen! The resurrection of Christ brings hope that

death is not the end! Christ has conquered and overcome sin and death, and the payment for sin that Christ made upon the cross was received and paid our debt. The apostle Paul highlights the significance of what the Resurrection means.

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:20–26, ESV)

In the resurrection of Christ, Jesus enters into his reign. The king has ascended to his throne. The resurrection of Christ is the first fruits of what's to come. Those who trust in Christ receive that same resurrection power! However, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Though Christ's resurrection ensures the defeat of death, the sting of death is very real and present in our lives. Though its power is loosed upon the believer, death still comes for the Christian. However, Christ in his resurrected power actually subverts death. For the Christian, death is not seen as a tragic end, but rather a glorious new beginning. In some ways, the Christian longs for death, knowing that death is a doorway into glory. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, death is a pathway into eternal life for all who would believe!

Therefore we grieve, but we do not grieve as others do who have no hope. The resurrection of Christ brings us hope in the face of grief and death. It tells us that God has overcome our greatest foe and in love, brings us into relationship with himself. The resurrection testifies to the power of God—for who has ever risen from the grave? Douglas Groothuis, a Christian apologist, says that "of all the world's religions Christianity alone purports to be based on the resurrection of its divine founder. No other religion or worldview make such an audacious and consequential claim." If the Resurrection is true (and it is), than this changes everything. If Jesus actually rose from the grave than He is Lord. What sort of man has ever risen himself from the grave? Jesus is more than just a man, he is God in the flesh. He is the savior of the world. If the Resurrection is true, then you must follow him. You must believe.

The goodness of resurrection provides certain hope, as we gaze upon the power of the risen Christ. Jesus provides hope for those paralyzed by the fear like grief. However, as we behold the glories of this Christ, we can't help but be overcome a different fear—a holy terror of the power of Christ. The fear of grief fades into a holy fear of Jesus as the Son of God.

3. Respond with Trembling (v. 8)

Mark's Gospel concludes with the raw response of these ladies after they receive this angelic announcement of Christ's resurrection. Upon hearing the angels words, "they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Have you ever received news before that was so shocking that you literally could not speak? Almost in an instant these ladies go from confused grief to fearful joy. As they walk out of the empty tomb, they tremble with astonishment at the news they just heard. "Is Jesus really alive? Could he have really risen from the grave? Was the angels message correct? What just happened in there?" However, Mark concludes his Gospel with the simple response "for they were afraid." The fear of grief they faced as they walked to the tomb that morning was not replaced with a different type of fear—a holy and terrifying fear of the glory of the resurrected Christ. The news of the angel left them trembling.

Though Jesus' humanity masked in many ways his divine power, at times when he reveals his divinity to his followers, the response has been holy fear and reverence over Jesus. Two examples come to mind from Mark's Gospel. First, when Jesus calms the storm on the sea of Galilee with a simple rebuke, "Peace, be still." At Jesus' command the sea stills and the winds cease. Mark records the response of the disciples, "they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'" The second example comes at the transfiguration of Christ, where Christ shines in his divine glory before Peter, James, and John as they cower in the dirt in holy fear.

Similarly, at the news of the resurrection, these women are almost paralyzed by the news of Christ's resurrection. They are fully aware of the implications of Christ's resurrection, that if he has been raised, their whole world will change.

The resurrection of Christ assures his divine power as the chosen Son of God and the promised Messiah. His resurrection testifies to his kingship that the Father has indeed put all things in subjection to the Son. The women realized, perhaps for the first time, that the rabbi they had been following was in fact God in the flesh.

Mark's Gospel leaves us on a cliff hanger so that we might respond to the angels announcement ourselves. As the Gospel goes forth through the known world, we herald the good news of the resurrected Christ. Our message centers on the truth that Christ has died for sins and is resurrected and alive! How will you respond to this Gospel news? How will you respond to the identity of Christ? Even though you've never seen him and you've never put your hands upon the scars of his wounds, do you believe upon him? Do you believe that he is risen?

In John's gospel, he gives us the account of the disciple Thomas, the infamous doubter. Jesus invites him to touch his hands and feel his scars. Upon doing so, Thomas confesses "My Lord and my God!" However, Jesus responds, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."¹ Mark leaves us with a similar question. Will we believe Christ is risen even though we have not touched him or seen him? Will we receive the Gospel message as true? How will we respond?

As we ponder the resurrection of Christ, we are left with fear and trembling. This Jesus who has risen possess the fullness of deity bodily. He is the king with divine power and authority over the cosmos. Yet, he is our brother and friend. He is our God and King.

Though Mark leaves us on a cliffhanger, we know how these ladies eventually responded. They shook off the stupor of their shock and went back to the disciples to tell them the news. The disciples couldn't believe it so they ran to the tomb themselves only to find it empty. Eventually they would see the resurrected Christ with their own eyes, touch him, and eat with him before he ascended into heaven. Upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early church lived under the reign of the resurrected Christ as they took the good news of Christ to the very ends of the earth.

¹ John 20:28-29

Final Thoughts

As we conclude the series of Mark two pressing question face you.

First, do you believe in Jesus as the resurrected son of God? Do you believe in the authority of his teaching? Do you believe in the power of his healing? Do you believe that he came to give his life as a ransom for many? Do you believe that he resurrected from the grave?

What you believe about Jesus is the most important question any of us will face. Upon reading and studying Mark's gospel, we've come face to face with eye witness testimony to who Jesus was and is. If have not received him as your savior and Lord, than today turn from your sins and trust in Christ. In holy fear and trembling come before him and confess him as Lord! Upon your faith in Jesus you will receive forgiveness of your sins and receive the promise of resurrected hope!

If the first question is *what do you believe about Jesus?* a **second** question follows; *what will you do with this news?* If Jesus has risen from the grave then your life and my life changes. We forsake the sins of our past and pursue holiness. We live as citizens of Christ's kingdom within the community of the church, an outpost of the kingdom of God in this hostile world. So we live together to worship the Lord together as we grow in holiness. We live in light of this gospel, but we also must proclaim this gospel. The good news of Christ's resurrection must be shared with the world, and the world must be invited to believe upon Christ. If Jesus is Lord, he is Lord over all. All the peoples of the earth need to hear about Christ's resurrection, because Christ alone is the hope of the world! Like these women and the disciples, we must boldly declare Jesus to the world around us. We must not only go across the street but across the globe to tell others about what Christ has done. Will you be a Christian who goes to others? Will you help fund the work of the Great Commission by giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering, funding missions work across the globe? Will we be sure to do everything within our power to tell the world that Jesus Christ is the resurrected son of God and only savior of the world!