

## “HE HAS RISEN!”

Mark 16:1-20

Key Verse: 6, “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.”

Today, we finish our study of Mark’s gospel, which we began on the first Sunday of this year. What was our prayer topic throughout this study? We have prayed to fix our eyes on Jesus and to grow as his disciples. Mark’s gospel began with the words, “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” Today, we hear the world-shaking, life-giving words of an angel, “He has risen!” At first, the women who heard this were too afraid to tell anyone. Thankfully, it did not stop there, or we might not be here at church today. In fact, Christianity would not be here today. The fact that Jesus Christ rose from dead is why there are Christians on earth today, and why people continue to trust in Jesus, love him, pray to him, and follow him. Let’s consider what the empty tomb of Jesus meant for his followers, and what it means for us and for our world today.

The account of Jesus’ resurrection begins with some women who saw Jesus die on the cross and who also saw where he was buried in a cave-like tomb by a man named Joseph of Arimathea. These women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—bought spices and went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ dead body, which had been wrapped in strips of linen. It was the day after the Sabbath, which is Sunday, the first day of the week. It was very early in the morning, just after sunrise, about 6 a.m. On the way to the tomb, the women realized they had a problem. They asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” The tomb was a small cave that had a huge stone laid across the entrance, set in a groove. It might have required several men with a lever to move it.

But their assumed problem turned out to be no problem after all. When they arrived, the large stone was already rolled away. Probably they were puzzled by this sight, wondering who rolled it away and why. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. Whoa! What are you doing in here? Who are you?

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Clearly, this man in white was an angel. According to the Bible, sometimes angels appear to people in shining glory. Other times, they appear much more human or normal-looking, except for perhaps white clothes, and also their awesome words.

So why was this good news given first to these women? Simply because they were the first ones to come to the tomb and show their love for Jesus.

What words did the angel tell these women? First, he recounted what had happened to Jesus. He said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified." Jesus was the one from Nazareth: the one they followed from Galilee; the one who preached the kingdom of God and healed the sick. The same one who was condemned and killed on a cross. Then he said, "He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him." Jesus was alive again! Jesus was not in the tomb, where they had placed his dead body. The women could see that his body was not there.

Then the angel gave them a direct mission, saying: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" The women were told to tell Jesus' disciples where they would meet the Risen Jesus. The angel said, "tell his disciples AND PETER." We last saw Peter denying three times that he even knew Jesus. He failed miserably. But Jesus did not give up on Peter. Jesus did not abandon him. Jesus was ready to restore Peter. Jesus is full of mercy and grace. Jesus is ready to restore us, even though we fail him again and again.

The angel told them that the Risen Jesus would meet them in Galilee. Jesus was ready to restore them all from their failure of abandoning him. The angel added the words: "just as he told you." When had Jesus told them that he would see them again in Galilee? It was right after the Last Supper, on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had predicted that his disciples would all fall away. At that time, Jesus also said: "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee" (Mk 14:28). Jesus knew that his disciples would all fail him. But he also knew that it would only be temporary. Jesus promised that he would see them again, in Galilee, where they had first met him, where they had first followed him.

So, how did the women respond? Did they go pounding on doors and shouting in the streets, "Jesus Christ is alive! He has risen!?" No. The Bible says, "They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." Some Bible scholars say that the original text of Mark's gospel ends here. If so, isn't that a strange place to stop? The women went out and said nothing. But the angel said that they would see Risen Jesus in Galilee. So did they? And if so, what happened when they saw him? It leaves us in the anticipation that they would see Jesus. Actually this is the anticipation that believers in Jesus have today. We have not had the privilege to see Jesus face to face. We have only been given a promise that he rose again and that we will see him one day. That is the hope and the promise for believers in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

Actually, Matthew's gospel does tell us that they saw him in Galilee, and when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus is such good news, that it seems to some people to be too good to be true, even among those who followed him.

As I said, Bible scholars debate whether verses 9-20 were in the original text of Mark's gospel or not. But don't worry. No doctrine of Christian faith or practice is affected by either including or removing these verses. In fact, all of verses 9-20 can be supported by other verses in the Bible. I will not go through these verses in depth, but I want to point out a few highlights. The strangest words are in verse 18: "they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all." Please don't go and test these verses out. Don't go pick up rattlesnakes or drink deadly poison. That would be testing God. Some foolish people have tested these verses and died as a result. I believe these verses teach that God will protect and strengthen his people in times of adversity. There is one story of Apostle Paul who was bitten by a poisonous snake, but he did not die. Because of this, people thought that Paul was a god (Acts 28:3-6).

As I said, the resurrection of Jesus sounded too good to be true to many. So when Mary Magdalene went and told the others... Wait a minute: didn't Mark say that they didn't tell anyone? Well, not at first. Obviously, they did tell others in time. John's gospel chapter 20 explains how Mary Magdalene met the Risen Jesus, since she lingered at the tomb. After meeting the Risen Jesus, Mary went and told the disciples, but they thought her words sounded like nonsense. Similarly, two men in Luke chapter 24 walked and talked with Risen Jesus, who was not recognized by them at first. They recognized him when he broke bread with them. Then they ran to tell others. Apparently, their account was also not believed. Risen Jesus then appeared to the Eleven (that's the Twelve disciples, minus Judas), while they were eating. Risen Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe the reports that he had risen. Thomas is famous for not believing that Jesus had risen. So he got the nickname "Doubting Thomas."

I want to focus particularly on verses 15-16, since they are most significant in this longer ending of Mark. Risen Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." This is a deadly serious matter. According to the Bible, which tells us God's perspective, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not optional for human beings, to take it or leave it according to our opinion or convenience. We either repent and accept it as the good news for our salvation, or we reject it and remain in the condemnation, judgment and guilt of our sins and rebellion against God. It is such a serious matter that all peoples of all nations need to hear this good news. Good news implies that there is also bad news. The bad news is that we all deserve the just punishment of a holy, righteous and perfect God. There is no one on earth who is righteous and has never sinned. There is no one who has lived up to God's holy and perfect law.

Apostle Paul said it this way, when he contrasted Adam with Jesus: "Consequently, just as one trespass [that is, Adam's sin] resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act [that is, Jesus' death] resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were

made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18-19).

Whoever believes in Jesus and is baptized will be saved. Whoever does not believe will be condemned. People, in their pride, want to ignore God or make their own convenient way to God. They want to write their own Bible, which suits their fancy. But Apostle John agrees with Mark and declares (1 John 5:10-12): “Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Risen Jesus worked through the apostles to heal the sick and drive out demons. Jesus can still heal the sick and drive out demons. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God’s throne. And Jesus Christ is still working today, in and through his followers, who call on his name.

So the question remains: what will you do with the gospel of Jesus? Have you accepted his salvation and lordship personally? It starts there. You can’t with integrity and sincerity share with others what you have not received first for yourself. So it starts with confessing and repenting of our sins, which includes lying, cheating, stealing, adultery, immorality, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, and selfish ambition. It means to turn from controlling and directing our own lives to seeking what Jesus wants and doing what he says. Have you invited Jesus and his Holy Spirit to dwell in you, fill you, purify you, guide you, and empower you?

Risen Jesus says, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” Have you committed your heart and life to Jesus, to love him, follow him, serve him, and obey him? One public way to do that is through baptism. Only you can decide to follow Jesus. No one can decide it for you.

For those who have accepted Christ and committed their lives to him, you’re not off the hook, or on easy street. I’m not saying your salvation is in jeopardy. I’m saying that your work for Christ is not done. Risen Jesus gave a clear command: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” We call this the World Mission Command. It is the same as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

What are you doing to fulfill the Risen Jesus’ final command? Are you participating in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and in making disciples of all nations? Have you shared the good news with anyone in the past week, or month? How about the past year? Have you invited anyone to church or Bible study in that same time? Have you prayed with anyone? Are you praying daily? Are you reading the Bible? Or are you spending all your time on social media, world news, entertainment, or improving your

own life? How's the thermometer of your love for Jesus? One way to self-check is to consider how you are spending or investing your time, your money, and evaluating what you are passionate and enthusiastic about.

Jesus Christ has risen. He is not in the tomb. Jesus defeated death and sin and the devil. Jesus is our Champion and Hero. No one else in history defeated death and promised salvation and eternal life. Will you be silent like the women who fled from the tomb? Or will you tell someone? Will you remain in sin and unbelief, or will you believe and be saved? Will you participate with your time, your money, your heart, and your life with proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to all people, even to your neighbor, your friends and your family members? Or will you live a self-centered, mind-your-own-business, politically-correct life?

Jesus calls us out of our comfort zones. I'm preaching to myself. Jesus said in Mark 8:35, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." Have you given your life for Jesus and for the gospel of his salvation? Or are you clinging to another way of salvation in your heart, like money or fun or human relationships or personal achievement?

I entered college in pursuit of the American Dream, also known as the "yuppie" dream. Wikipedia defines it accurately: Yuppie: short for "young urban professional" or "young upwardly-mobile professional," is a term coined in the early 1980s for a young professional person working in a city. That was my dream when I entered college in the fall of 1983. There was only one problem: my dad had died of a heart attack just six months earlier, which left an emptiness in my heart regarding the meaning of my life. I entered college with this worldly yuppie dream. But I left college as a different person, and what happened in between was Him. I found a greater treasure, a greater purpose, a greater joy, a greater hope, a greater peace—than anything I believed this world could offer: Jesus and his kingdom. At my first Easter Bible conference I realized, "There's no hope in this world since everything and everyone dies. The only living hope is Jesus Christ, because he rose from the dead." Yes, Jesus Christ rose again! Jesus Christ conquered death. There is eternal hope and eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

What are you living for? What is your hope? Apostle Peter had been a coward on the night of Jesus' arrest. He denied his Lord and Master three times. But later, after the resurrection and the Holy Spirit's presence upon him, Peter said, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:3-4). This same Peter once rebuked Jesus for talking about his upcoming suffering. But after resurrection hope and faith came to him, he said to suffering Christians: "But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1Pe 4:13).

Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. He lives and reigns forever at the right hand of God. He will come again in glory to judge all people, both living and dead. Whoever believes in him will be saved from their sins. They will be saved from a meaningless, self-centered, pleasure-seeking life. We have heard the good news of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, which all the world needs to hear and believe. Do you believe it? Will you share it with others?