

"Risen!" - Mark 16:1-8

I am so happy you all are here to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The resurrection is perhaps the single most significant event in the history of humanity. I only say perhaps, because the crucifixion is right up there with it. The crucifixion and the resurrection go together hand in glove. Jesus willingly gave up His life to pay the penalty for my sins, and yours as well. The execution of Jesus Christ is the most heinous crime ever committed, But what man meant for evil, God meant for good. By His wounds, we are healed. By faith in Jesus and His finished work, we are reconciled to God.

But without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. Without the resurrection, there is no salvation.

There have always been false teachers who would deny the resurrection. "It is absurd," they say. "Death is the end; nobody comes back from the dead."

They are wrong! The Apostle Paul answered some of those false teachers who were hanging out in Corinth, and he said this:

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (1 Corinthians 15:17)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a reality. There were many witnesses to its reality. He was seen by faithful women, all the Apostles, and many others as well. Paul says that at one point, Jesus was seen by over 500 people and many of those witnesses faced martyrdom rather than deny what they knew to be true. Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Now, just to review for a moment, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was subjected to no fewer than 6 illegal trials in just a few hours, three before Jewish authorities, and three before the Gentiles. He was scourged by the Romans and He was hung on a cross between two criminals. Mark tells us that He was crucified at 9:00 in the morning – the third hour. At noon, the sixth hour, a supernatural darkness descended on the land. Hell came to earth. The Father poured out His wrath full-strength on His beloved Son. Jesus became sin for us, and countless eternities in hell were condensed into those few hours on Calvary. At the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus cried out,

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"; "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Mark 15:34)

Then with a triumphant cry of victory: "Teleo" (It is finished), He relinquished His Spirit.

Joseph of Arimathea petitioned Pilate for the body, and Jesus was laid to rest in a rich man's tomb, with a huge boulder sealing off the entrance. By then, it was getting late. The Sabbath began at sunset and so faithful women, who wanted to anoint Jesus' body for burial had to wait until Sunday morning to bring the necessary spices. That is where we pick up the story this morning.

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. (Mark 16:1-4)

Now, when we think of Jesus' disciples, we generally think of the twelve Apostles, but Jesus had many other followers, both men and women. Back in chapter 15, we find the following:

There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. (Mark 15:40-41)

These women were devoted to Jesus. They ministered to Him. They followed Him up from Galilee and they did not scatter when Jesus was arrested and murdered. Other than John, we have no Gospel record of the Apostles hanging around to witness the crucifixion. But these women did. And they wanted to perform one last act of devotion for their beloved Lord.

So, very early in the morning on the first day of the week ... that would be our Sunday, they brought a load of spices to anoint His body. But they knew they had a problem. The tomb had been sealed with a heavy rock. Not only that, because the Jewish leadership was concerned that the disciples would come and steal Jesus body, there was a contingent of Roman soldiers guarding the grave. Matthew tells us about that.

So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard. (Matthew 27:66)

But it turned out that they didn't have to worry about the stone. They didn't have to worry about the guard. They didn't have to worry about the seal because all that had already been taken care of. When they arrived, they found that the stone had already been rolled away.

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. (Mark 16:5)

Why were they alarmed? Well, first of all, the body of Jesus wasn't there. That certainly was unexpected. Instead, they encountered an angel, who had been waiting for them, and he had a message for the women:

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. (Mark 16:6)

So, the angel tried to calm the women down. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "In other words, relax! Everything is okay. You're looking for Jesus, but He isn't here. He's not here because He is risen! And here's the evidence: This is where they laid the body. Do you see a body? Of course not; He's not here. He is alive!"

Now as we have often seen, Mark is really concise in relating the story. His gospel is action-oriented and we often have to go to the other gospels to get more detail. Sometimes takes a little work to harmonize the accounts. For example, in John we read this:

Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." (John 20:1-2)

So, combining this with the account we find in Mark, apparently Mary Magdalene got to the tomb first. Maybe she was in better shape and walked more quickly. I don't know. But her first reaction was to run back and tell Peter and John. In the meantime, several other women arrived, and they encountered an angel or two and an angel gives them some direction:

But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:7-8)

Now, when it says that they didn't tell anyone, that might be misleading because they certainly did report the empty tomb to the disciples. Matthew tells us:

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. (Matthew 28:8)

So, what Mark is saying is that they said nothing to anyone along the way. They were so focused on bringing the news to the Apostles, that they couldn't take time to talk to anyone. There is no contradiction. We just need to combine the gospel accounts to get the full story.

But the Apostles had a hard time believing this. Luke tells us:

And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. (Luke 24:11)

Still, it was enough to make Peter and John run to the tomb to check out their story. And yes, the tomb was empty! Jesus is risen! Because He is risen from the dead, it is possible for you to have a living relationship with Him. The fact that He was raised from the dead indicates that His sacrifice was accepted by God. He was seen alive by many, many witnesses. And then after 40 days, He ascended to the throne of God to continually make intercession for us.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

God is immaculately holy and cannot tolerate sin of any kind. That's really bad news for us, because we're all sinners.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

God is perfectly just, which means that He must punish every sin.

For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23)

That's eternal death, folks, a forever existence in agony, suffering in the throes of death, with no hope of relief. Hell is real, it is horrible, and it is forever.

But despite the fact that you are guilty of cosmic treason, God still loves you.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

That's what the cross is all about. Jesus went to the cross and endured the hell you deserve so you wouldn't have to.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

You cannot earn salvation because you can never be good enough for God. Your sin must be paid for, but you get to choose who pays for it. Trust Jesus, and He pays for your sin. Reject Jesus, and you will be paying for your sin forever.

Jesus did all the work and all He asks in return is that you just believe. Admit you are a sinner. Believe Jesus died for your sins. Submit to His Lordship. And believe that God raised Him from the dead.

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Your salvation is just a prayer away, because our Jesus is alive! He is risen indeed!