

Mark 16:1-8

¹ Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother of* James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" ⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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." ⁸ 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.

We have worked our way through Christ's death. We have covered it step by step, event by event. We have traveled through the three hours of earth's greatest spiritual darkness. We watched as the creation put the creator to death. We have seen the ultimate mutiny of our planet earth under the leadership of Satan, the enemy of every man's soul. We have seen what man will do when there is no light in him. We have seen what we have all been guilty of in one way or the other. When we look at Christ on the cross, we don't identify with Christ. We identify with the mockers and the villains who put Him there. Apart from Christ's work in our hearts, we are them.

We have worked our way through the darkness of our situation. We have watched as Christ moved steadily toward the end He always had in mind. When He said, "It is finished", no cheers arose in the hearts of the believers. They did not understand what God had in mind. They were at best, confused and at worst, disheartened.

But they were not to **remain** that way. There is always an end to a Christian's confusion if we will just be patient long enough.

Now we are about to see what happens when hope descends on a group of people. We have people running to and fro with wild emotions. They are coming off the worst news they could imagine. And it is about to be countered with an absolute surprise to everyone. It was darkest night. But the greatest sunrise in history is about to occur.

I wonder how many of you have had the same experience I have had when reading I Cor 15. Growing up, the gospel consisted largely of my sin and Christ's death. In fact, there are lots of times I have presented the gospel without including the Resurrection. Paul didn't tend to do that.

Paul said this:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Notice that Paul included the resurrection in his presentation of the gospel.

Then in the rest of chapter 15 of I Cor he explains why it is so important.

First, he lets us know that it is historically verifiable. There were multiple eyewitnesses of Christ after the resurrection. That is vital. Ours is not a mystical leap of faith. It didn't spring out of a person's experience, like so many other religions have. Islam is based on the experiences of one man with no way whatsoever to verify the authenticity of the experiences. Mormons and Jehovah's Witness are based on the same thing.

But we don't have such a thing. Paul wrote with no hesitancy at all about the proof of the gospel. Think about that. He was telling people how they could check it out. If they didn't believe it, if they wanted to play lawyer, Paul was not going to punish them for not accepting his version. He would have handed out names and addresses of the eyewitnesses. A huckster won't do this. A liar won't do this. Hucksters and liars will demand blind faith. But Paul laid out the evidence for this event in a way that any doubting Thomas could check it out and have their doubts laid to rest.

Why is the Resurrection so important?

First, it makes the claims of Christ historically and humanly verifiable. A person can **claim** a lot of spiritual things. But until there are **verifiable facts** we cannot know if their claims are true. Like when David Sitton said that his God was more powerful than the gods of the witch doctors. That is easy to say. But when the Witch doctors could not perform their spiritual exhibitions, the proof was shown. And it was convincing. It was a verifiable claim. So Paul lays out the fact of all of the eyewitnesses.

Then Paul puts it in the negative. He says this.

1 Corinthians 15:14-19

¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those

who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ **If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**

Wow. There is a lot riding on Christ's resurrection.

¹⁴ **And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.**

So second, the Resurrection is important because without it both our preaching and faith are empty. The word for empty means vessels that contain nothing. Without the resurrection of Christ, without that event, everything we believe is just another religion. It is just a vain hope for deliverance from sin and death. It is just an opiate like Karl Marx described it. It is a crutch for weak minded people. All of our critics are correct, if Christ has not risen from the dead.

To look at it in reverse, it is the Resurrection that makes our preaching and faith the very opposite of empty. Our preaching and our faith are full and powerful. They result in miracles of changed hearts, lives and destinations. It is by our preaching that people are saved. It is by our faith that we are saved. What could be more full or powerful than that? But if there were no resurrection, none of those things would be true.

The third reason the Resurrection is important.

¹⁵ **Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise.**

The Resurrection has such a place in the gospel that if there is no resurrection we are a bunch of liars. That is exactly what much of the world accuses us of. And without the Resurrection of Christ, they would be correct. But because of the truth of the Resurrection, they are completely and utterly wrong.

Again, if we state this positively, because Christ rose, we are the most important truth proclaimers on this planet. Even if a person had the secret for everyone to live 150 years, the truth we proclaim is **more important**. Because what we are proclaiming is how to live **forever**. And it is all because Jesus led the way.

The fourth reason the Resurrection is important.

¹⁷ **And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!** ¹⁸ **Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** ¹⁹ **If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**

The word for futile here means useless, to no purpose. This truth I think is probably the most powerful statement about the resurrection. Without the resurrection there is no salvation. If Christ did not raise and you still believed about His death for your sins, you would still be in your sins. Christ dying on the cross did not complete your salvation. Christ rising from the dead did. Until

Christ rose from the dead we had no hope of eternal life. We would have a **theoretical belief** of a better spiritual state while we lived, but it would not have the payoff that is promised.

Look at what Paul says here. Look at the reasoning. I remember reading stuff written by Christians in the 70's who were standing up for their Christian beliefs. Their reasoning went something like this. They would say, "Even if I am wrong about salvation, I live a richer, more moral life because of it. I limit sex to one partner. I spend my money more wisely. I don't live addicted to drugs and alcohol. I obey the laws. Therefore my beliefs have done me a great amount of good and I wouldn't give them up even if I found out they were wrong. I am convinced Paul would have looked at this person and said, "you are an idiot." Paul didn't cling to any of those idealistic notions. His reasoning was this. If the gospel **does not produce eternal salvation**, the gospel serves **no useful purpose**. In fact if we were to determine that the Resurrection did not take place, we are to be pitied. We are to be viewed as a miserable bunch of people. The assumption is that when we follow Christ we are not gaining **both** the **world** and **eternity**. We are, in many ways, giving up the pleasures that could be had **here** for pleasures that we are assured of in our eternal home. And to be giving up stuff here and getting no payoff is stupid and miserable. And what is the determining factor of whether we are the most fortunate or the most miserable of people? The resurrection of Christ.

Paul continues in

1 Corinthians 15:32-34

³² **If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If *the* dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"** ³³ **Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."**

³⁴ **Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.**

Now Paul applies this to his own experiences. Essentially he is saying, what is the point of suffering for Christ if Christ has not risen? No. Paul says he would logically pick a different lifestyle and would affirm anyone else who did. What is that lifestyle? Hedonism. It was encapsulated in the beer commercial that says you only go around once in life so go for the gusto. Paul says let's do those things that give us pleasure because our capacity for pleasure will soon end.

You see, the absence of the belief of an eternity that is better than this reality is the problem with our society. We are surrounded by people following their hearts trying to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. The idea that there is a God and we will answer to Him for what we do is archaic. It no longer holds any sway in our society at large, and it appears to have very little effect on those who declare themselves believers.

Then Paul goes on to say, don't buy those lies. Don't be deceived. Then he quotes a saying of that time. Evil company corrupts good habits. Essentially if you hang out with people who don't believe in the resurrection, especially inside the church, your behavior will lean toward hedonism- the pursuit of personal pleasure.

Instead of that Paul directs believers to ³⁴ **Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.**

Paul is telling people, live like Christ has Resurrected. Live like you will Resurrect. Wake up to the truth. Take a full view of the Resurrection. Live according to your own resurrection. The result will be seeing and doing what is righteous and seeing and avoiding that which is sinful. Those who don't understand the Resurrection won't live this way. And that is the church's fault when we are not correcting these people inside the church.

Then Paul says this later in His letter to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

⁵⁰ **Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.** ⁵¹ **Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--** ⁵² **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** ⁵³ **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.**

⁵⁴ **So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*"** ⁵⁵ **"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"** ⁵⁶ **The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.** ⁵⁷ **But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁵⁸ **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**

Everything of importance is based upon the truth that this actually happened.

I have probably said this before. Sometimes I pity you because I am probably like my grandfather. He only had a few stories that he liked to tell and he would tell them over and over again. What I wanted to say is that there are two points of the assurance of my faith that stand like lighthouses on a rocky shore.

The first is creation. When I look at creation, I experience no confusion or doubt. There is a God. There has to be. I can read any document about evolution and I get the same feeling when I experience bad scholarship of the Bible. Someone is trying too hard to explain something that is not that hard to explain.

When I look at creation I know two things. There is a God and He is powerful. So I don't wrestle much with the existence of God. But much of my wrestling in my

young life was in the question, how do I know Christianity is true? How do I know that I am serving God in a way that will please Him?

Now the second lighthouse shows up on the horizon. It is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the face of many, many eye witnesses. And then the additional assurance that none of these people would have accepted their own deaths for their belief in this Christ if they had not seen with their own eyes the resurrected Christ.

It is the Resurrection of Christ that assures us our faith is not misdirected. God had to raise Christ from the dead. It could not happen any other way. And there is no other religion that has such a verifiable history.

It is the Resurrection of Christ that assures us that our faith is not futile. If Christ raised from the dead, His Resurrection proves His **ability to raise us** from the dead. And His words prove **His intention** to raise us from the dead.

You and I who believe and have committed our lives to Christ are so very very blessed. We have a Savior who has shown His ability and intention to raise us from the dead. We have a salvation that is powerful. We have a Lord that will save us from the **power of sin** here and now and the **presence of sin** in eternity. We do not live for this life only. And we don't hope in this life only. If we did, it would be truly sad. We live for eternity.

Alright, now that we have had a glimpse of how important the Resurrection is, let's take a look at the record of the Resurrection.

¹ **Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother of James*, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.**

Mark, in his usual fashion, does not tell us everything.

Luke 24:10 tells us that Joanna and other women were there too. Mary, the mother of Jesus was there too. Some of these were the women that followed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus getting Christ's body ready for burial on the day he was crucified. John 19:39

I don't know why but these women also wanted to prepare Christ's body. We already talked about these women who, more than likely bought the spices on Friday after having a high Sabbath on Thursday. Then after the weekly Sabbath on Saturday they showed up on Sunday morning.

These women were doing an impressive thing. They were displaying their love for a dead master. They were paying their respects. That is all good, as far as it goes. But it turns out in this case they were actually wasting their money. Whatever money they spent to purchase burial spices, they were not going to use them any time soon. Christ didn't need any.

² **Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen**

Matthew explains they came as it began to dawn Matt 28:1.

So basically these women showed up as soon as it was beginning to be light. They didn't try to come at dusk on Friday. They had to wait through Saturday. They didn't come after dusk on Saturday as it would have been too dark too quickly. So they came as soon as they possibly could on Sunday morning.

John 20:1 tells us that Mary Magdalene got to the tomb while it was still dark. When she saw that the stone was rolled away it is very likely that she panicked. And our drama begins. Mary, not waiting for the rest of the women, probably panicked and ran to Peter and John. They immediately thought that someone had stolen His body. John 20:2

Now the other women are following behind and we are given a little insight as to what they were saying.

.³ And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large.

Now, I am not trying to be critical, but wouldn't this question have been a good question to ask **before** they walk to the tomb with supplies to enter the tomb and do some work. Wouldn't you think this was a detail that should have been considered first?

And what do we learn? When God acts, even the best laid plans are unnecessary and the worst laid plans are just as effective. In other words, trust in God is more important than human wisdom. One could argue that these women were acting more upon sentiment than common sense. But it turns out they are rewarded for acting out their love for Christ.

This huge stone that they had no way of moving was already out of their way. That is amazing. The women didn't know what had happened prior to their arrival.

Matthew 28:2-4

² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*.

That is **how** the stone was rolled away. And from everything we can see, the stone was not rolled away so Christ could leave. It was rolled away so everyone could see that He was no longer there.

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

The word for alarmed means to throw into terror, to alarm thoroughly, to terrify. In other words these ladies were freaked out. Remember, these ladies had just walked through the dark to get to Christ's tomb. They expected to have some difficulty getting to Christ. They were probably preparing themselves emotionally

to see Christ dead and deteriorating. This is not the kind of thing someone blandly looks forward to. It would have been emotionally charged. So when they first arrive they had to think, something is not quite right. The stone is gone. Why?

Evidently the angel had moved inside the cave. Maybe he was still glowing. Maybe not. But whatever the case, this is not, in any way, what these women expected to see. One could hardly come up with some way that these women had planned ahead of time to make up a story about Christ's Resurrection. The truth is, the fact that Christ was not there dead and corrupting was a shock to these ladies.

John 20:12 tells us there were two angels. But since only one talks that is where Mark spends his attention.

⁶ 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.

This is kind of funny. The women were freaked out. The angel, in essence said, don't be freaked out. He used the same word that described their reaction.

Don't be freaked out.

How many times do we need to hear that very thing? Don't be freaked out. You know that life situation that you were not expecting? Don't let it get you out of shape. This is a brand new opportunity to trust God.

How many miserable days and nights could we have avoided if we would just do this one thing? How much time have we wasted because we refuse to trust God in the situations that freak us out? Yet that is exactly what we are told to do. It shouldn't take an angel for us. Scripture already tells us the same thing.

Then the angel gives the women the details that they need to know.

You are looking for Jesus. Well you won't find Him here. I wonder if it was hard for the angel to hold his tongue and not say he has risen, just like Christ said 100 times, just like Christ said every time he talked about His death.

Maybe it was out of kindness he let that slide.

And then look what the angel does. He essentially challenges the women to check the facts. Look all you want. This is the right tomb. This is where they put Christ. But He is not here.

According to [Luke 24:5](#), the angel also asked the women, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"

This was probably a mild rebuke to the women for not expecting Christ's resurrection.

Then he gives the women some orders.

⁷ 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." ⁸ 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.

So these women were to convey a message to the disciples and Peter. My guess is that Peter was singled out because, about this time, Peter might think that even if Christ arose, He would want nothing to do with Peter. So this message was also to reach Peter with intention. He should know that he was singled out to receive the message.

And the message? Go to Galilee and I will meet you there.

And what did the women do? They skedaddled. And we are told what state the women were in.

First they trembled. They were literally physically shaking. And they were amazed. They were thrown into a state of fear and wonder.

MacArthur gives us a few more facts

After the women had left, Peter and John arrived at the empty tomb ([John 20:3-9](#); cf. [Luke 24:12](#)). Mary Magdalene also returned to the tomb, after Peter and John were gone ([John 20:10](#)). This time, she too saw the angels ([v. 12](#)) and encountered the risen Lord Himself, initially thinking He was merely the gardener ([vv. 14-18](#)). Jesus appeared to the rest of the women also, as they were walking on the road to meet the disciples. Matthew records that joyous reunion: [The women] left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.” ([Matt. 28:8-10](#))

When the women, including Mary Magdalene (cf. [John 20:18](#)), found the disciples and reported what had happened, the eleven initially refused to believe their news ([Luke 24:10-11](#)). Their lack of faith made them slow to respond to Jesus’ command to go to Galilee. It was not until after the risen Christ repeatedly appeared to them in Jerusalem (cf. [Luke 24:13-32](#); [John 20:19-31](#)) that they finally were willing to head for Galilee ([Matt. 28:7, 16](#)).

While studying this I see the truth in it. I know that what we are reading is true. But then I live and I forget. Can you relate? It is difficult to know, sometimes how to apply this. Should we refuse God given pleasure now simply because it is pleasure? That doesn’t seem to be what the rest of scripture says. I think the trick to applying resurrection living comes in the word First. **Matthew 6:33**

³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** Applying the resurrection to our lives in a proper way means to do the most important things first. To put them as the highest priority.

To not leave them undone. If we will do that, everything else will take its proper place.

So the question this morning is, in light of Christ's amazing resurrection, what is there in our lives that we know without a doubt **is important** that we are either **not doing**, or we are relegating it to a place of insignificance? What would we be doing different if we were really living for eternity? What is of first importance that we treat like everything else? If we are believers, we will be resurrected. It is a certainty because of Christ's Resurrection. I am not sure how all the rewards will be granted and how the responsibilities will be divided. I do know though, that how we live here and now has a direct bearing on what positions we hold there. And rightfully so. Should the apostles be granted the same position as the thief on the cross? Should those who spent much of their lives ignoring or disobeying God's Word receive the same reward as those who lived by obeying God? It is literal. We can store up treasures in Heaven. It is real. Faithful living will be rewarded better than faithless living. As the truth of the resurrection really grips us, it will change us. And we will see this life as opportunity. It is opportunity to prepare for eternity. So let's examine our lives this week to see how we can really make use of our time to prepare for eternity. And how we can encourage each other to do the same.