

Gospel of Mark Chapter 16A **“Christ’s Victory Over Death”**

During his earthly ministry the Lord Jesus raised 3 individuals from the dead. All of His disciples witnessed at least 2 of these three resurrections.

- Jesus raised a widow's son in the town of Nain (Luke 7:11-17),
- Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56),
- Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

Jesus often told his disciples that he, himself would be raised from the dead on the 3rd day. Mark 8: 31 **And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**

Matthew 17:22 **“The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, 23 and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.”** And they were greatly distressed.

John 2:19 **Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”**

- Does it seem strange to you that none of the disciples actually anticipated the resurrection of the Lord?

There is evidence that members of the council were thinking about Christ’s resurrection after he died.

Matthew 27: 62 **Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’**

64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

Despite his obvious power over death and the many predictions of his own resurrection three days after He died the Disciples of Christ seem to be sleeping in and the faithful women who ministered to him during his life were preparing to minister to him in his death.

- It becomes obvious that none of his followers, none of His disciples were anticipating his resurrection.

I hate to admit it but there is a part of me that actually takes comfort from the disciple’s cluelessness.

- NOT that I think it gives me a license for my own ignorance BUT:
- I take great comfort knowing that God graciously, actively and persistently pursues his disciples when they can’t find it in themselves to pursue him.

This morning as we consider Mark’s narrative :

1. The testimony of the empty tomb
2. The testimony of the Angels
3. The testimony of the Eye Witnesses.
4. What do all of these testimonies mean to US.

FIRST: The testimony of the Empty Tomb

Mark 16:1 **When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.**

- Remember that the Lord Jesus died on the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath.
- He was buried by Joseph and Nicodemus before sundown on Friday.
- The Sabbath ended at 6:00 on Saturday and this is when the women went out to purchase the spices they would need to anoint the Lord Jesus the following morning.
- Mark tells us (15:47) that these women followed Joseph and Nicodemus when they buried the Lord Jesus. So they knew where his body was laid.

Mark 16:2 **And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”**

Mark tells us that this was early on the first day of the week. So we have arrived at Sunday morning.

- Before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the most important day of the week for the people of God was Saturday. That was the 7th day, the Sabbath Day, the day that the Law of God commanded to be kept holy.
- The resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the first day of the week changed all of that.
 - The resurrection is the pivotal point in the history of man. It transformed the worship of God forever!
- Just as the Death of Jesus brought an end to the celebration of Passover and the institution of the Lord's Table, the Sabbath requirements were brought to an end by the institution of the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

On THIS side of the Resurrection there is a new rest for the People of God but that rest is not identified as a day, rather it is identified as the rest of faith: It is a rest that affects every day of our lives.

- We find our rest in the finished work of Christ. By the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ' death and resurrection we have entered into a glorious rest.
 - We are not striving to be accepted by God through our own efforts.

Ever since the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus the Church has gathered on the first day of the week. In the book of Revelation John calls it “The Lord's Day.”

- This is the day the women set out to anoint the Lord's body.

One of the things that I deeply appreciate about the Biblical narrative is the humanness that it consistently portrays.

- Here we have a group of women walking to the tomb. Women don't walk in silence. They talk to one another expressing their concerns. Mark records their conversation.

They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” (Did you see that stone.. It took 4 men to move it on Friday... Maybe if we all push... I'm not sure we can do it! Someone has to do it. Maybe someone else will help us?)

- If this was a group of men I'm not sure there would be anything for Mark to write.

When you dig into the scriptures you come away with a deep appreciation for these women. We met them back in Chapter 15: They were there at the Cross.

Mark 15: 40 **There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.**

- They are described as women who followed and ministered to the Lord Jesus.
 - They followed him all the way from Galilee; they loved him, they worshiped him, they served him by meeting the practical needs of his daily life.
 - Certainly they would have spent much of Friday and Saturday weeping and lamenting his death.
 - But as soon as the Sabbath was over they did what loving family members did in those days, they went to the tomb in an expression of loving devotion to anoint his body.
- They witnessed his death, they witnessed his burial and now on Sunday they would be the first to witness his resurrection.

It is interesting to me in the sovereignty of God that it was WOMEN who served as witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

- Jewish opinion of women, especially in religious matters was not at all positive.
- In the legal system of that day women were not permitted to serve as witnesses.
- When you think about it, the testimony of these women actually confirms the authenticity of the resurrection narrative. HOW?
- You see, if the church wanted to fabricate the story of Christ's resurrection and make it believable in their culture they would never have used the testimony of women.

BUT God chooses to use what is foolish in eyes of the world to shame the wise; God chose the things that are weak in the world to shame the strong; (1 Cor 1:27)

Mark 16:4 **And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.**

- Without doubt, this would have been a shock to these women. Remember along the way they were discussing **“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”**
- They didn't know that on Saturday the Jewish leaders went to Pilate and asked for a few Roman soldiers to seal and guard the tomb.
- These women may have been shaken out of bed that morning by an earthquake but they certainly did not know what it meant.
- They didn't know that an angel had come down from heaven and rolled the stone away. They didn't know that the guards fell like dead men before the heavenly visitor and when they finally came to they ran away.
- ALL the women know, when they arrived was that the stone had been rolled away.

The testimony that has stood for 2000 years is this: The tomb was empty and the empty tomb testifies that Jesus who died as a bodily being was physically raised to life as a bodily being.

- No one has ever been able to locate the body of the Lord Jesus but he was seen by as many as 500 people at one time.

- The Sanhedrin, with all of their bribery and all of their lies was never able to discredit the testimony of the empty tomb.
- Every one of the Lord's disciples went to his death confirming the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But the testimony of Christ's resurrection is not ONLY built on what WAS NOT there; it was built on what WAS there. The angels of God bore witness of Christ resurrection.

Point Two: The Testimony of the Angels.

Mark 16: 5 **And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.** 6 **And he said to them, "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.**

- The women were "Alarmed" utterly amazed (Lit - terrified - their brains are on overload) and the angel said, "**Don't be alarmed.**"
- He seeks to calm them down, comforting them with the joyful news of Christ's resurrection.
- Luke tells us that there were TWO angels: Why the difference? There are times when one individual (human or angelic) does the speaking and it is recorded as only person.
- Both Luke and John describe 2 angelic visitors.

Luke 24: 3 **but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.**

4 **While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.**

5 **And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"**

6 **He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,**

7 **that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."** 8 **And they remembered his words,**

- The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is confirmed by the testimony of 2 angelic beings passing on their testimony to 3 human beings.

Deuteronomy 19:15, **Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.**

- And so we move from the angelic witness of the resurrection to the human witness.

Point #3 The Testimony of the Women:

Mark 16: 7 (The Angel speaking to the women) **But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."** 8 **And 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.**

Go tell his disciples and Peter.....

- The angelic visitor commissioned the women as messengers and he singled out Peter to make sure that he heard the good news.
- I believe that Peter was more troubled by the crucifixion than anyone.
- Satan was sifting him like wheat. He was crushed and broken not only by the death of Jesus but even more by his threefold denial.
- BUT we serve a God who forgives our sins, one who continually cleanses us from all unrighteousness. The angel says **make sure you tell Peter!**

WHAT was the message? What did the angel tell the women? “HE is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

Let’s think about that: If I were to tell you that the risen Christ is going ahead of you and he will meet you in Birdsboro, what would you do?

- You would leave right now and go to Birdsboro. Right?

But the disciples remained in Jerusalem, even one week later we still find them hiding out in the upper room.

- It took a while for the message to get around; it took even longer for all of the disciples to believe the woman’s testimony.

Luke 24, On that resurrection Sunday there were two disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus. Their conversation expresses cynicism over the women’s testimony.

22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

- One of the Twelve, Thomas expressed his doubts in the Gospel of John

John 20:25 “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

- These are strong words of deep disbelief.
- But Jesus is patient, he is kind, he meets with Thomas and provides his chosen disciple with all he needs to affirm the truth of the resurrection.
- Back to the women: According to Matthew they didn’t have to wait very long for confirmation of Christ’s resurrection.

Matthew 28: 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

- The book of Acts chapter 1 informs us that over a period of 40 days the Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples ALIVE from the dead!
- The message that these women carried, the Apostles’ declaration of Christ’ resurrection became the foundational truth on which the entire Christian church has been built!

So I can say with all sincerity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the most significant event ever to take place in the history of mankind.

Writing to the church at Corinth Paul powerfully declares the importance of Christ’s Resurrection?

1 Corinthians 15:14, If Christ has not been raised our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Vs 17, If Christ has not been raised then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Vs 18, If Christ has not been raised then our loved ones who died have all perished!

In that same chapter Paul states:

1 Corinthians 15: 20 **But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** 21 **For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.** 22 **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

Mark Dever: “So just as death came through Adam so life comes through Christ.

At the first tree we all fell at the second all who believe will rise. Expelled from the garden into DOOM, now freed into life from the TOMB.”

POINT #4 What do these testimonies mean to us?

How does the resurrection of the Lord Jesus affect your life:

1. We can believe that Jesus is who he said he was.

Jesus drove the Scribes and chief priests crazy when he said he was the Son of God.

The Old Testament predictions of Christ’s death and resurrection, Jesus’ own words predicting his death and resurrection all cumulate in the testimony of the empty tomb and the multitude of witnesses who saw him alive after his passion stand in history as PROOF of his claim to be the Son of God in Power.

Romans 1: 3 (Paul speaks of the prophecies of Scripture) **concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh** 4 **and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,**

- Can you name ANY other individual from first century Judaism who claimed to be the Messiah? The historian Josephus tells us that there were many in his day who made that claim, BUT there was only ONE who was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the Son of God!!

2. Christ’s resurrection proves that we can be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God.

We all know that Jesus DIED but

- HOW do we know that His death was an acceptable sacrifice for our sins?
- How can we know that his suffering on the cross removed God’s righteous anger?
- How can we know that the atonement actually worked?
- We KNOW that Christ’s sacrifice was accepted by the Father because Jesus rose from the dead!

Romans 4: 25 (Christ) **who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the public affirmation of God’s acceptance of Christ’s payment on our behalf.

- His resurrection secures the loving embrace of God for all who repent and believe. It is the basis on which you and I are able to appear before our Holy God at the end of our lives and not be forever damned.

What we have done against God (*all of us*) deserve his judgment because he is good, he is right, he is holy. IF that is surprising to you, it may be something that you would consider.

- Why would a good God judge me?

The church of Jesus Christ is made up of individuals who have considered that question. It is made up of individuals God has graciously awakened to see the reality of their broken and sinful condition.

- The church is made up of sinners, a specific subset of sinners, repentant, forgiven sinners

What a source of JOY this is for us! We can KNOW that we are accepted by God, NOT because of any works we have done but by his grace and mercy alone, we are loved by God.

Death will not be the end of us

John 6:40 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

2 Corinthians 4:14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

- His resurrection assures our OWN resurrection

Jesus was physically raised from the dead and so all who are “In Christ” will all experience a bodily resurrection.

- No other religion has this hope. The HOPE of eternal life assured by a risen Savior.
- No other religious writing contains the same prophetic accuracy as the Bible.
- No other religion welcomes sinners with the open arms of redeeming Grace.
- No other FAITH has the power to awaken the soul from death to life.

Christ Alone is risen from the GRAVE.

