

Day 7: The Resurrection

Mark 16:1-8

We've walked through the final week of Christ during this Lenten season. We've gone from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on that first Sunday to his not-so-triumphal entry into the grave. Well – from the looks of it it doesn't appear “triumphal.” Maybe if Jesus fought hard, and battled against warriors and resisted so much that it took legions of armies of men to defeat him – maybe then we could argue that it was a “triumphal” entry into the grave...but he didn't, and it wasn't. It looks more passive than anything else. And yet it absolutely was triumphal in every aspect.

It's been 3 days – 3 days since Jesus died. Three days since their faithful leader was crucified and these 3 faithful, devout, loving women want to continue to share, and show, their love for this man. I love that their concern, as they walk this early morning route to the tomb, that their concern was about who or how this heavy stone would be rolled away. Who had the strength, who had the ability, who so desired to be the one to do this? And if not us...who could? There is absolutely zero expectation of a rolled away stone and empty tomb. Even though they've been repeatedly warned – it doesn't cross their mind. It's not part of any of the words spoken. In truth NONE of the disciples ever recall over those 3 days those words that were repeatedly spoken by Jesus.

And so these women, as they walk, talk through their plan. It's the least they can do. It's as if it was a plan that was planned but not fully talked through together. They're working out on the fly. Being that the shops and stores were closed until late last night...since it was the Sabbath, by the time they get the spices it was too dark to make the journey to the tomb – so they go now – the next morning. They have come to the tomb carrying spices and oils to anoint Jesus' body and to share and show their love. But they carry more than that. They carry heavy hearts.

This was their Lord and Savior. More than a Rabbi, more than a teacher, this man healed, brought to life, inspired, and loved more than anyone ever did or could...and what happened on Friday...*that* was not supposed to happen. 3 days ago he was nailed to a cross. 3 days ago he uttered, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (**Mark 15:34**). 3 days ago he drew in and exhaled his last breath. They've been in mourning for 3 days. We don't read this in scripture but I picture that as Christ drew in those final breaths – these women exhaled out as hard and deep as they could...willing their breaths into him. But it didn't take. It didn't reach. It wasn't meant to be.

And so now, this final act of love, was to give Jesus a proper burial.

But as they walk they also carry *dry* tears – not because their tears are hollow and empty and worthless or mean nothing – but because they’ve cried so much that there is simply nothing left. The tear ducts could only hold so much, there is a certain point when you simply cannot cry any more. Your sorrow is now reflected in your words, your actions, your slowed footsteps.

And so they come. Carrying an eternity worth of pain in their hearts – and spices. Two enormous acts and expressions of love and devotion. This is what you do when someone you care about has died. You cry for them, you prepare things for them, you visit them in their resting place.

As they approach the tomb, finally gazing up and not looking at their own footsteps, they see that the large stone has been rolled away. Entering into the tomb they immediately see a young man dressed in all white and sitting off to the right. Mark doesn’t have to tell us that the women don’t see Jesus – the words come directly from the angel. “*You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene – the one who was crucified. He has risen and he’s not here. See? This is where he was laid, and this is where he has risen and left from.*”

And then he gives these women the command to go. Go and tell those followers. Jesus, the Nazarene, has gone ahead of you into Galilee – and there you will see him just as he told you.

So the women take off and do so. Bewildered, confused, trembling...they simply follow. What else are they to do? The body is obviously not here.

Mark is so quick in his account of what happened that to some readers we might be confused. We want to know more, hear more, see more – so we read the other accounts instead. Matthew has 20 verses on the resurrection. Luke...53 verses. John? 56. But let us not forget – Mark is the *first* gospel to be written – the earliest story of Easter. And let us not assume that simply because Mark has an abrupt ending in his gospel that it means anything less.

Mark, if you recall, frequently uses names and images to help the readers along. He uses these as sign posts and guides as well as citations. It’s a way for Mark to remind his

readers that this is not only factual and truth...but these people (insert name here) were here! You don't believe me? Go talk to them. And that's something we see here as well. If we go back to Friday, to the death on the cross...(if you have your Bibles open) – look at **Mark 15:40**. Who was there watching from a distance? Mary Magdalene...Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Women who loved and followed and cared for the needs of Jesus – and many other women were there...but Mark specifically names these three. Now...jump ahead to verse **15:47** and who do we see? Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph. Now jump ahead to our text today...who do we see? Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James...and Salome. Same three. In the matter of 8 verses Mark gives us three women whom people knew, whom people could go to talk to, whom people can hear and have his gospel truth verified. 3 women who can say, *“Yup...we were confused, we were distraught, we were winging it that morning as we walked to that tomb. We weren't sure how we were going to roll that tomb stone away...and then that angel!? THAT was unexpected!”*

And then just as he goes from these women as citations...he jumps to the disciples...and Peter. In verse 7 we get the angel saying, “But go, and tell his disciples and Peter...”

“And Peter”...what an interesting thing to say. “Go and tell his disciples...” – I get that. That makes sense. Go tell the people that love Jesus, that have walked with him and were fed by him, go tell those that still mourn, deeply mourn, that he is alive. That he has risen from the dead – as promised. But why name Peter specifically?

Well, in truth we all do that. If we send someone somewhere to bring a message...we'll frequently have a specific note for someone else that would be there too. And when we namedrop a specific person it's intentional. We want *that* person to receive *that* message for a specific reason.

But what's interesting is Mark doesn't tell us why Peter specifically is mentioned. He doesn't say, “And tell Peter that _____.” We should assume that he would be part of that group because we know he's a Disciple of Christ...and yet Mark includes his name anyway and without specific intentions mentioned. Why?

On one hand – while Mark is the author of this book it might as well have been called the “Gospel of Peter” because Mark is the companion and friend of Peter who is writing Peter's words. Mark is, essentially, Peter's scribe. So on one hand Peter is putting himself in this story-line. By saying, “...and Peter” it's yet another way of saying, *“Peter can verify all that I, Mark, have written...and Peter can verify that Christ was raised from the*

dead!” And so there is definite truth there. But I think there is something happening on top of this.

Of all of Jesus’ disciples, who was the strongest voice and defender of Jesus? Peter was. Of all the disciples, *who* spoke up and wanted to know more, see more, be more, and learn more...we could make an argument that that was Peter too.

And of all the disciples...who would go from that wise sage who speaks glorious truths out of thin-air and also an amazing and fearless defender of Christ, to all the sudden confused speaker and denier of Christ? Who is it that goes from “You are the Messiah” to being told by the Messiah to “get behind me Satan!” and then abandons and denies Christ? Peter.

But let us not think that this is a warning as WE would probably want to give and be given. Mark isn’t writing to say, “*Hey Peter...Jesus is back...and he is MAD AT YOU so you best be get’n out of Jerusalem!*” that’s not it at all. Would it have been warranted? Absolutely! But that’s not what Christ is about. This is a “prepare yourself” to see forgiveness message. Because the one that you saw beaten, that man you left and said three times that you didn’t know...he’s *not* dead. His wounds are real...but so is his breath...his living – and his forgiveness. He has risen not to condemn...but to draw in. To love and forgive.

I think the disciples needed this...and I absolutely think Peter needs this more and wants his readers to understand that. The angel wants Peter to know that all is forgiven. You are loved. That the death of Christ was not because of what he did or didn’t do...and even though you are beating yourself up for what you did and didn’t do...his death, his torture, his beatings definitely were not warranted...but they were taken on by him. It was a death for him, and people like him.

For you and me.

We read in **Luke 24:36-46** that when Christ appears to his disciples on that resurrection day he says, “Peace be with you!” And then he opens up the scriptures so that they could understand that he had to suffer and he had to go to the grave. That it wasn’t “triumphal” in a battle and fighting kind of way because it was destined, it was set in stone, it was required and necessary because it was the only way for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be given. It was the only way that your denial of me, Peter, could be forgiven. So maybe not “triumphal” in the way we think...but oh how it was triumphal.

Triumphed over sin? Check.

- That was done on the cross when Jesus atoned, sacrificed, had his blood spilt, shed, and poured out for the complete forgiveness of sins.

Triumphed over death? Check.

- That was done when Christ rose from the grave after being there for 3 days.

I actually really appreciated how Mark ends his gospel. Trembling, bewildered...the women hurry away – carrying the message of the resurrection. They are commissioned, by the angel, to share this “good news.” To share the message that “He has risen!”

And they do. Because he has.

The resurrection is about hearing, “It’s OK...all is forgiven.” The resurrection is about experiencing the pain and suffering of Christ, with Christ, so that we too could experience the joy and hope in his rising to life. Being given that which we could not achieve on our own and could never be given without his love, sacrifice, power, strength, and might.

But let us also not stand and stare at the empty tomb. Just as we don’t stare at the bloody cross, we shouldn’t stare at the empty tomb. Christ isn’t there. The word “empty” implies exactly what it means. And just as those women were commissioned to “go and share” this good news...so too shall we.

Because the One who conquered sin and death has risen (he has risen indeed).