

## He was raised on the Third Day

Mark 16:1-8

Covenant Waterfall, 15 August 2021

Read

Pray

### Introduction

Don't you just hate it when you're watching a movie or reading a book, and the main character, the hero, dies right at the end? Think of movies like *Saving Private Ryan*, or *Gladiator* and *Titanic*. Leaves you disappointed, like it's not meant to end this way. Perhaps it's a deep desire within all of us for good to triumph over evil, not the other way around!

Well, we've finally reached the end of Mark's Gospel. Last week, we looked at Jesus' tragic and brutal crucifixion, death and burial. Throughout Mark's Gospel, we've seen Jesus revealed to us as the Son of God, the promised Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of God's people. And now, where we stopped at the end of chapter 15 last Sunday, Jesus, the hero of Mark's Gospel, is dead?! Surely that cannot be? Yet, as we've also seen throughout this Gospel, God's sovereign hand has been guiding everything just according to plan.

The Apostle Paul writing some years after all these events in the Gospel, crystallised the gospel message for us in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. The first two gospel truths he declares are: **"Jesus Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried..."** (vv.3-4). If we stop reading at that point, we are surely left dismayed and hopeless. Thankfully, verse 4 continues to declare this third gospel truth, **"that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."** The first two gospel truths don't make sense without this third and final gospel truth – that Jesus was raised on the third day.

The resurrection of Christ is therefore the key to the gospel. It is fundamental to our faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus, we've got nothing: no living Saviour, no forgiveness of

sins, no faith and no hope in eternal life. Might as well pack up and go home now if Jesus wasn't raised.

Our text this morning, the conclusion of Mark's Gospel, is an eyewitness, historical account that testifies to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we will see from the text is that because Jesus indeed is risen from the dead, we do have a living Saviour who reigns on high, who has forgiven our sins and who promises to raise us too from the dead and bring us into life eternal.

- Witnessed by Women, vv.1-4
- Gospel proclaimed, vv.5-7
- Fear and trembling, v.8

#### **A. Witnessed by Women, vv.1-4**

**"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. <sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large."**

Just to remind ourselves of the context from last week. Chapter 15 ended with Jesus' burial after his crucifixion and death. In that last section of chapter 15, Mark strongly emphasises the fact that Jesus has died – not passed out, in a coma, but is really dead. In the space of 6 verses (vv.42-47), his death is mentioned 5 times, including using the word "corpse" for his body. We're under no illusion here that Jesus is in fact dead.

Verse 1 begins by telling us that the Sabbath is now over. This is connecting us to what we looked at last week – Jesus had to be buried by Friday evening, because of the Sabbath. We're also re-introduced to the group of women – Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Salome, who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and saw where he was buried. Now that the Sabbath is over – ends Saturday at sunset – the text tells us that they go and buy spices in order to anoint Jesus' body. This anointing of the body was not an embalming process – not

to preserve the body like Egyptian mummies, but rather to perfume it – act of respect and devotion for the deceased.

Verse 2 continues, saying that the women, now prepared with the spices, go early in the morning to the tomb, “on the first day of the week” in order to anoint Jesus’ body. It is this first day of the week (Sunday), the day after the Jewish Sabbath, that we’ll soon see to be the day of Jesus’ resurrection. Significance? The first day of the week became the day the church gathered to worship God. New Covenant – Sabbath shifted from seventh day, to the first day. NT church met on Sundays – Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2 – became known as the “Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). Significant we gather to meet every Sunday, as the church, in doing so we commemorate Jesus’ resurrection – truth of the gospel.

Old Covenant – work six days, rest on the seventh – nature of covenant of works – work in order to earn God’s favour. New Covenant = opposite – begin the week with rest and hearing the gospel – Christ is risen. We work rest of the week, from this place of rest, in the light of what God has already done for us in Christ.

Verse 3 continues – as the women were on the way to the tomb on Sunday morning, they suddenly realise that there’s a big fat rock sealing the entrance to the tomb, they’ll be unable to move it – not strong enough. Yet, as they arrive at the tomb, verse 4 tells us that to their astonishment, the “very large” rock has already been moved.

Let’s just pause here and take note that it is these three women who are about to be the first witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection (all four Gospels attest to this). In the ancient world, the testimony of women was not believed. Their testimony was inadmissible in a court of law – held no weight. If the account of Jesus’ resurrection was fabricated (as many people believe), then you can be sure that their story would not have been hinged on female witnesses, but male witnesses. The fact that it was women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection, is convincing proof that what we have here is indeed a true, historical account of the events.

## **B. Gospel proclaimed, vv.5-7**

**“And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> 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.**

Verse 5 tells us that as they arrive at tomb with the stone rolled away, they enter it, only to find a young man sitting there and dressed in white. They are “alarmed”. “Alarmed” here doesn’t quite capture the Greek. You are “alarmed” to find out that you forgot the roast in the oven, and it’s now a piece of charcoal. Instead the Greek word here captures the women’s intense emotional state – they are greatly perplexed and distressed. Mark uses the same word to describe Jesus’ emotional state while he’s praying in the Garden of Gethsemane in chapter 14:33.

Why are they intensely distressed? Jesus’ body is nowhere to be found and there is this strange young man sitting in the tomb. From the other Gospels, we know that this young man is indeed an angel, a heavenly being. So this kind of distressed reaction of fear is the usual reaction throughout the Bible when people encounter angels – shepherds’ reaction to the angel at Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:9) – “they were filled with great fear.”

It’s for this reason that the young man says to the women, **“Do not be alarmed...”** just as the angel had said to the shepherds in Luke 2:10. This young man has some news to share with the women. Indeed, this is the function of angels – God’s messengers to declare his news – meaning of the word – angellos = messenger. “news” = angellon, good news = eu angellon. Greek lesson for the day!

What news has he come to tell them? Verse 6, **“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.”** Jesus has been raised from the dead! He announces to them the good news, the gospel: Jesus has conquered the grave, he lives and reigns!

Translation “he has risen” not strictly correct. Greek word used here is an aorist passive, should be translated, “he was raised.” Significance? He didn’t rise from the dead on his own accord, but God raised him up. The Apostle Peter, preaching just weeks after this event on the Day of Pentecost, declared in Acts 2:24, **“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”**

The proof of Jesus' resurrection is the simple fact that his body is no longer in the tomb, which the angel points out to the women, **"he is not here..."** Key point! Jesus was not raised to life in his spirit, while his body lay in the grave. Nor was he just resuscitated from a coma. No – his corpse was raised from the dead – physical resurrection, into a transformed, glorified, incorruptible body, as 1 Corinthians 15:42 tells us. It's the same body which he has right now in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father.

The angel then tells the women, in verse 7 to, **"go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."**

What are the women instructed to do after hearing the announcement of Jesus' resurrection? "Go, tell..." It is the only appropriate response to the gospel. The nature of the gospel is not something that we must do, or must live out – do more miracles, do good works, spiritual techniques etc. – that's law, not gospel! "Living out the gospel" is a contradiction in terms. Instead the nature of the gospel is that it is an announcement – an announcement of what God has done in Jesus Christ. What then is the only appropriate response to the gospel? It's *news* to be received, and told to others.

The women are instructed to go and tell Jesus' disciples, singling out Peter, that the risen Christ will meet them in Galilee. Why is Peter singled out? Remember that he denied Jesus three times after he was arrested in Mark 14? Peter is singled out specifically because Jesus intends to restore and forgive him, as we see in the other Gospels. It's an act of grace towards Peter. Though Peter failed and sinned, Christ will forgive him, restore him and continue to use him powerfully for the sake of the gospel.

It's this truth that 2 Timothy 2:13 declares, **"if we are faithless, he remains faithful"**. God remains faithful to us in spite of our own sins, failures and faithlessness, precisely because salvation belongs to him – he will empower every believer to persevere to the end by the power of his Spirit – showing that it's all his work, and not ours.

### **C. Fear and trembling, v.8**

How then do the women react to the news of Jesus' resurrection? Last verse, v.8 tells us:

**“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.”**

Why are they trembling and seized with fear? Surely you would expect them to be rejoicing? Actually their reaction is evidence of the truth of this historical account. They were not expecting anything like this. In fact, just two days before this, they saw with their own eyes Jesus brutally tortured, crucified, killed and buried. Just seems so incredulous that he is now alive? Theirs is an honest, gut reaction to the news of the resurrection – they are struck with fear and awe. They realise that this Jesus whom they’ve got to know over the past few years is not just man. There’s something much greater going here than they can wrap their heads around - God himself has done a great wonder and come to his people.

## **Conclusion**

We’ve walked through this eyewitness account of the discovery of the empty tomb and testimony to Jesus’ resurrection. But so what? So what if Jesus rose from the dead? What we need to understand is that Jesus death for our sins on the cross and burial only make sense if indeed he was raised to life.

If Jesus had died on the cross, like the two criminals beside him, and remained dead, his life would be no different from any other human being who walked the face of the earth. Perhaps he’d be remembered as a great spiritual man who founded a movement, like Mohammad, or Buddha. But just another man who lived and died cannot really have any eternal bearing on our lives.

If Jesus had stayed dead, it would prove that death had the rightful claim over him, and therefore, as 1 Corinthians 15:17, we would still be in our sins. How come? The penalty of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Yet Jesus was raised from the dead because, as Acts 2:24 declares, **“it was not possible for him to be held by it.”** Why? Because he was sinless, the perfect Righteous One, the only sufficient offering that could turn away the wrath of God.

The resurrection therefore changes everything. Firstly, because the sinless Saviour died for our sins, and rose again, this means that our sins are truly forgiven. Payment for our sins has

been made and the power of sin has been conquered. In Christ, our sins really are forgiven and no longer can we be dominated by the power of sin any more.

Secondly, because Jesus rose from the grave, he conquered the power of death. Because he was raised from the dead, this means that all who trust in him will also be raised from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:20 declares this truth, **“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** His resurrection is the first fruits of our resurrection. Death is not the end for us if we’re in Christ!

Brothers and sisters, repent and receive Jesus Christ – the One who died for your sins, was buried and who was raised on the third day. Because of the truth of his resurrection, if you trust in Christ, your sins are indeed forgiven – removed as far as the east is from the west – restored as sons to our Father in heaven, and you will be raised from the dead in a new resurrection body just like Jesus’ to new life in him – real eternal hope.

Amen.