

Message #62**Mark 16:1-8**

Collectively here in a congregation of nearly 600 people, we have attended hundreds of funerals and visited hundreds of cemeteries. I have personally done graveside committal services in many different states in this country. Just in this greater Kalamazoo area, I have personally done committal services in at least thirteen different cemeteries. Now just imagine what it would be like for us to go to the cemetery and have someone say you don't need to be here. The person you came to memorialize is not here. That person who died is no longer dead. Take a look at the casket or urn—the person is gone and is alive. There is no body. There are no ashes. They are alive and gone.

That did happen once. That is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ and what this proves, according to Paul in Romans 1:4, is that Jesus was who He claimed to be—the only God/Savior/Messiah/King. Jesus Christ is the only one who can save us from our sins.

The grace Gospel that saves a sinner from all of his sins is one that demands the resurrection. The Apostle Paul was very clear to point this out (I Corinthians 15:3-4). People die and people are buried. That is the way it is. But people don't come back to life after they are dead and buried. So they cannot possibly save us. A dead savior is no savior. In order for a Savior to be the true Savior, He must be alive and He must be able to do something about death, which is a penalty for sin. Only one Person fits this—it is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can save any one from any sin and the proof of this is His resurrection. All other religious systems that teach anything but this are false.

Now since the resurrection is so critical to show us who can save us from our sins, it stands to reason that God will give sufficient data to prove the historical point. The resurrection is so important that all four gospels reveal it: Matt. 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-23. The events of the resurrection are provable and there were many eyewitnesses that establish historical fact. That all starts right here.

Now Mark's account is brief but it is important. Keep in mind that the Apostle Peter would have been very much involved in communicating these things to Mark, plus he probably actually talked with the women involved here. What we see here is this:

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE REALITY OF IT WAS FIRST DISCOVERED BY KEY UNBELIEVING WOMEN, WHO ARE SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED AND NAMED.

Now this is critical to see. The first eyewitnesses were women and the first eyewitnesses didn't believe Christ would be raised from the dead.

We may remember that when Jesus was crucified, three women were near the cross watching it. Those women were Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James and Joses) and Salome (15:40). After Jesus died, two of the women followed to see where He was buried. They were Mary Magdalene and Mary (mother of James and Joses) (15:47). **These three were the last at the cross and the first to the tomb.**

According to **verse 1**, just as soon as the Sabbath was over the three women went and bought some spices so that they could anoint the body of Jesus Christ. Now the Sabbath ended at sunset which is about 6PM on Saturday evening. As soon as it was 6PM, businesses opened again and life got back to the hustle and bustle of normal activity.

Doesn't that seem strange? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Messiah of Israel had just been executed on Friday and by Saturday at 6, business is back to normal. This is Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and one day after His crucifixion the attitude of the world was "O well, let's go back to work." This shows you how callous this world is to the truth of God. We know from Revelation that after the Rapture of the Church, the world will go right back into a godless party mode.

Now since it is late in the afternoon and since it would be too dark to go to the tomb then, apparently the women decided they would get up early Sunday morning and go anoint the body. Now we know that John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus used spices to use in regard to Jesus body (John 19:38-40), but apparently these women wanted also to anoint the body themselves and pay their own respects.

Now the spices they bought were not for embalming the body. Jews did not embalm bodies. These spices would not preserve the body in any way. The spices were designed to cover the smell of a dead body. There is a stench of decay with a dead body and the spices would keep it from smelling as it decayed.

Now I will give these women credit here. They spent money on spices and they did want to do something for the body of Jesus Christ. The disciples have done nothing. They didn't bury the body and they didn't buy spices and they were not going to go to the tomb.

One thing we can observe here and that is when you love someone and spend some money on a funeral, it is the kind of thing these women did for the dead body of Jesus. They could have said, well He is dead so there is no point spending good money on a dead body. But God takes notice of those who do. These women are named for the sacrifice they make in purchasing these spices for a dead body.

But here is the reality of this. The reason they are buying the spices is because of their unbelief. This is not an act of faith. This is proof they don't believe what Jesus told them.

Jesus had specifically told them that after three days, He would rise again (Mark 8:31). No one believes this, not even these women. This makes the proof of the resurrection even more credible. The women who will first testify of it don't believe it.

Now there are six carefully presented chronological facts presented here:

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #1 – The resurrection events started very early in the morning on the First day of the week. **16:2**

Now John tells us that these women took off for the tomb when it was still dark (John 20:1). The women took off in the dark. By the time they got to the tomb the sun had risen. It was Sunday morning. Christ was crucified Friday morning and buried Friday afternoon. He was in the tomb Friday night, Saturday night and it was now Sunday morning.

All the gospels emphasize that this was the day this happened (Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19). This is why we worship on Sunday. This is why the early church met on the first day of the week. Those religious systems who try to get people to worship on Saturday or what they call their "Sabbath Day" are demeaning the very day of Christ's resurrection.

Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross and He nailed the Sabbath day to the cross and those groups who worship on the Sabbath Day make a mockery of this critical reality (Col. 2:14-17).

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #2 – The women were discussing who they would get to roll away the stone from the door of the tomb so they could get in to anoint the body. **16:3**

Now what this conversation proves is that these ladies have no thought of a resurrection. They don't for one second believe Jesus has risen from the dead. They should have been discussing the fact that He said He would rise from the dead on the third day. They should have said this is going to be an exciting day. This is the day Jesus promised He would come back to life. Instead they are discussing that which is meaningless. They are discussing a problem that does not even exist. All the way to the tomb, they are worried about getting the stone removed, when in fact it has already been removed.

Sometimes we worry and fret over things that are meaningless in light of Scripture. Often if we just remembered what the Word of God said, we wouldn't have any worries.

Now one would naturally think that since these ladies thought the tombstone would be such an issue, they would have asked the disciples to go help them move it. But they didn't.

Well as they were getting near the tomb, the tombstone is the sole topic of their conversation. No one is talking about the potential of a resurrection, which Jesus predicted multiple times. No one believed it. Had they believed it they would have all gone to the tomb to see if Christ were there.

In our day a typical stone on a grave can weigh 200-300 pounds. But a stone in front of a tomb in Christ's day weighed several hundred pounds. Not only that but Pilate had sealed the tomb after soldiers had rolled a stone over it and then he stationed them there to guard it (Matt. 27:64-66).

There is no way that a few women are going to move that stone. Many farmers roll their hay into bales that are 500-600 pound bales. I challenge anyone to try and go and move one of those bales. So this was a legitimate concern for these women. How are we going to roll away the stone so we can get into the tomb?

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #3 – The women looked up and saw that the large stone was already rolled away. **16:4**

Remember these ladies had been walking in the dark and as they are getting near the tomb, it is light and they looked up and to their surprise, the large stone that weighed hundreds of pounds had been rolled away. Mark is very careful to point out in **verse 4** that it was an “extremely large” stone. When they got there, they saw the stone had been “rolled away.”

God had already rolled the stone away. **The reason why God rolled the stone away was not to let Christ out but to let the witnesses in.** Jesus is God and He can pass through walls and appear and disappear as He wants (Luke 24:31; John 20:19). He didn't need this tomb opened to get out. God opened it so people could look in.

What we learn from Matthew 28:1-4 is that God sent a violent earthquake and He sent an angel that simply rolled away the stone. In fact, when the angel rolled away the stone, he sat on the stone and the Roman guards were so afraid they were literally shaking (Matt. 28:2-3).

According to Mark 16:4, the women got there and saw the stone was rolled away. All of their worry and discussion was for nothing. We are so like these women. We, at times, worry over nothing. For example, one of the greatest worries people have is what happens to them when they die. Are they good enough to go to heaven? Do they have a chance to get there? If you believe in Jesus Christ, your worry is for nothing. Your sins are gone. You don't need to worry about it or talk about it.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #4 – When the women enter the tomb they saw a young man sitting to their right wearing a white robe. **16:5**

Now Mark does not identify this young man as an angel, but Matthew tells us he was an angel (Matt. 28:2-3). So this angel took on the form of a young man. **Angels showed up to announce the birth of Christ and an angel shows up to announce the resurrection of Christ.**

The man was like lightning and he was wearing a gleaming robe that was as white as snow (Matt. 28:3). These women were shocked and amazed at this. First, the tomb does not have a dead body and second, here is this man who looks like something they have never seen before.

Now what this shows us is that angels are very real and they have very real responsibilities. Angels can be intimidating or encouraging. Angels can be used to judge or comfort. When the women saw this angel, **verse 5** says they were “amazed.”

This particular Greek word “amazed” only occurs in the N.T. in the gospel of Mark. It is used to describe great emotional surprise and perplexity and even being terrified (Mark 9:15; 14:33; 16:5, 6) (G Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 136). These women have no thought of a resurrection. They were totally and completely shocked to see this.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #5 – The young man (angel) speaks to the women. **16:6-7**

As the women were in their state of shock, the angel spoke to them and communicated at least eight messages to them:

Message #1 - Do not be amazed. **16:6a**

It was a little too late for that. What this angel is saying is knock it off. Stop being amazed by this.

Message #2 - You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. **16:6b**

You are at the right tomb. This was where Jesus of Nazareth was buried after He had been crucified. He says, we know why you are here.

Message #3 - Jesus has risen. **16:6c**

Ladies, the reason the tomb is empty is because Jesus has risen. This is why the body is gone.

Message #4 - Jesus is not here. **16:6d**

In other words, you are looking for Jesus in the wrong place. You won't find Jesus around people or places that are dead.

Message #5 - Look here at the place where they laid Him. **16:6e**

This is the right tomb. This is the right spot. His body was laid right here but He is gone.

Message #6 - Go and tell His disciples and Peter. **16:7a**

I am convinced that Peter is communicating this to Mark and this would have been an important moment in the life of Peter. Peter at this point was feeling very low. He felt like a loser. He had failed the Lord Jesus not just once, but three times. Just imagine what it would have been like for these women to go back to Peter and say the angel at the tomb specifically wanted us to tell you, Peter.

This would certainly be wonderful for him to learn that an angel specifically named him and wanted these ladies to tell him. This would give hope and encouragement to a disciple who failed.

There are eight major realities we do not want to miss from Peter's experience that can give hope and encouragement to us when we fail:

- 1) God knew what Peter was like when He saved him just like He knows what we are like.
- 2) God knew Peter would fail and told him he would fail just like He knew we would fail.
- 3) God saw Peter the moment he failed just like He sees us the moment we fail.
- 4) God saw Peter after he failed, just as He sees us after we fail.
- 5) God greatly used Peter after he failed (i.e. 3000 saved in one message), just as He can use us after we fail.
- 6) God's love for Peter was greater than Peter's failure of Him, just as God's love for us is greater than our moments of failure.
- 7) God knew Peter was heartbroken over his failure just as God knows when we are heartbroken over our failure.
- 8) God used Peter to greatly strengthen others after he had failed just like He can use us to strengthen others after we fail.

Those words of the angel "tell Peter" are great words for us.

Message #7 - Tell the disciples that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. **16:7b**

The things they have seen here and learned were not to be kept to themselves, but they were to communicate these things to Jesus' disciples. The truth of God is for the disciples of God. At this point the news was not for the lost world, but for Christ's disciples.

Christ's greatest work should have been done in Jerusalem, not Galilee. But this fact brings out an important theological point and that is **the program of God as it relates to the resurrection would first go to the Gentile world and then come back to Israel.**

Message #8 - You will see Jesus there just as He told you. **16:7c**

The program of God is based on the Word of God. This is the problem—people do not rely upon what God tells them in His Word.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACT #6 – The ladies respond. **16:8**

Now look at **verse 8**. I realize that things like this don't happen in a cemetery normally, but keep in mind that Jesus told them he would rise from the dead. They should have been rejoicing, but that is not how they responded. They responded in six ways:

Response #1 - They left. **16:8a**—they got out of there as fast as they could.

Response #2 - They fled. **16:8a**—Greek word means these ladies took flight at full speed.

Response #3 - They trembled. **16:8b**—they are literally shaking as they are running.

Response #4 - They were astonished. **16:8c**—Rare word—their minds were in an abnormal state.

Response #5 - They were silent. **16:8d**—double negative—they said absolutely nothing

Response #6 - They were afraid. **16:8e**—this was a phobia kind of fear.

They were scared.

They certainly did not go away happy and singing Christmas carols. But I will say this for these women—they were there. They may not have believed, but they were there and they got to see something no one else saw.

Do you know what this resurrection says? Stop worrying about your sin. Paul said in Romans 4 that we are justified that is we are declared righteous from all of our sins by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus “was delivered up because of our transgressions and raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:24-25).

Now perhaps you are here and you are a believer and you have failed just like Peter. God’s comforting word to Peter was “go tell Peter I will meet him in Galilee.” God’s comforting word to you is come back to Me and I will meet you and fellowship with you in Kalamazoo.