

Mark 16:1-15

"A Reason To Rejoice"

It's a fair question. Why make such a fuss over resurrection Sunday? Why is the reality of the resurrection is such a big deal to believers? & The answer is that *every thing, every detail, every word, every principle* of the Christian faith hinges upon the reality, the actuality of that one thing.

Whatever things Jesus may've *said*, whatever things He may've *done*, whatever things He may've *taught*, they all lose their value, their importance, their weight if He is not risen. Oh they may be some great ideals & ideas but it pretty much ends there apart from the resurrection.

As a matter of fact Paul the apostle went as far as to say *"...if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"*¹ Or to understand that another way? Apart from the resurrection, there's no point to any of this. If Jesus hasn't risen, why even waste our time being here? We could be asleep, or watching T.V. perhaps out at the park or whatever... But we're here because He's alive, He's given us life & we have a *relationship* w/the Risen Savior.

Listen Christian, you don't have a *religion*, you have a *relationship* the Living God, even J.C. who has defeated death through the blood of His cross & the power of the resurrection! & If we can be reconciled to God through His *death*, we can only try & imagine what He can accomplish through His resurrection *life*. That's what Paul was talking about there in Rom Ch 5 when He began to speak of the unsearchable love of God as demonstrated in the cross of J.C.

He began to explore the concept of what might cause a person to be willing to die for someone else. Because his mind was being blown (& appropriately so) that Jesus would die for the ungodly, the sinful, the reprobate/debased, the immoral & the degenerate. & He said, "You know, I could maybe see how for a *righteous man* one might scarcely die." Meaning that if it were someone who could benefit the world in a way greater than myself, than there might be the rare individual who would lay down his life for that person. He went on, "Perhaps for a good man one would even dare to die." He said, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*²

Notice the comparison & contrast. The love of man might, maybe, very rarely die for someone whom they thought was a great person. But God demonstrates *His own* love...

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 15:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 5:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's not like man's love, it's infinitely higher than man's love, it's a love indigenous to Him. It's beyond our ability to comprehend this kind of love. When the psalmist considered God's love it was too much... He thought of how thoroughly God knew him, not like others knew him, but the real him. He knew his sitting down & rising up, his very thoughts before he thought them, He was acquainted w/all his ways. There wasn't a word on his tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. Yet that God had hedged him behind & before, that God had laid His hand *upon* him, shown favor *to* him... He said, *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it."*³

Translation? It's beyond my ability to grasp; there are no words that can accurately articulate it. But God would do one better, He wouldn't merely articulate it, He would *demonstrate* it... & God *demonstrated* His own love toward us in that while we were still *sinners* (those reprobate, immoral, ungodly individuals) Christ died *for us*...

He washed us & cleansed us, reconciled us to God through the blood of His cross. He did *all that* through *His death*. Now think this through; if He accomplished all that through *His death*, we can't even *begin* to comprehend what He can accomplish in His resurrection *life!* That's what Paul was being blown away by when he went on to write, *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*⁴ If reconciliation is accomplished through His *death* how much more can He solidify/ratify such a salvation through His resurrection *life*? If Jesus accomplished so great a salvation for you when you were His enemy, just think of what He'll do *for you & through you* now that you're His friend (bro/sis). If God saved you through Christ when you were *against* Him, just think of what He'll do for you now that you belong *to* Him, you are *for* Him, you're His child... You see, what you're into (believer) isn't religion...

...Over the last 6 months or so I've been introduced to a new form of fitness (for me) known as jujitsu... (which translates into I get beat up a lot ☺). Last Tuesday I was probably tapped 10x in 25 minutes. It was just a relentless pounding. Well, afterward I must've looked a little disheartened (in reality I was just trying to regain my ability to stand upright), but one guy took it upon himself to come & offer a word of encouragement to me. & He said, you know the day will come when you'll get to be the hammer & you'll no longer be the nail...

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 139:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 5:9-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Honestly, he was very kind & encouraging me to keep digging, to stay committed etc. But he said, “You know, this might sound blasphemous to you but jujitsu is like a *religion* to me. I see life through the lens of things I learn on the mats, how to be disciplined, knowing that I can survive things that I think might kill me etc.” & I told him that he wasn’t really offending me at all because I can see how jujitsu can definitely be a religion. But in his mind, jujitsu was to him what Christianity is to me. He had his religion I had mine... What he didn’t understand is that I don’t have a religion *at all*. What you have isn’t religion, it’s a relationship w/the One who has conquered sin & death & has reconciled to you to God through His death & resurrection...

That’s why we make such a fuss about this day. Because *apart* from it our faith is futile & we’re still in our sins, but *because* of it old things have passed away & we’ve been made new creations in Christ...

Well, by the time we catch up to our text in Mark 16 it’s Sunday morning. Friday morning well before dawn Jesus had been arrested in the garden of gethsemane. He had received a mock trial, He had been beaten beyond recognition & filleted (scourged) w/a cat of 9 tails. He had a crown of thorns beat down upon His head & then He was taken & nailed to a cross where He hung naked & bleeding in open shame for some 6 hours. Upon completion of the perfect sacrifice for sin through the breaking of His sinless body & the shedding of His blood, He cried out those 3 famous words, “...it is finished!” The penalty price for our sin had been paid in full... Upon surrendering His Spirit unto His Father in heaven the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, access to the holy of holies (into the presence of God) had been granted through the sacrifice Jesus had made. No longer was their *separation* between God & man, but through Christ there was now *reconciliation*...

He was taken down placed in a tomb & the stone was rolled over the opening & sealed. (Caiaphas [the high priest] & his crew had requested & been granted a Roman guard to secure the tomb to prevent any of His disciples from breaking in & stealing the body). But since He died later in the afternoon & there was no time to properly prepare the body before the Sabbath. So 1st thing Sunday morning before the sun came up certain ladies were going to go to the tomb so as to properly anoint & prepare the body of the Lord... Look at Vs 1.

Vs 1-3

Btw as a little side note, this is why the church meets on Sunday. Sometimes people will ask the question; if Israel honored the Sabbath (Saturday), why is it that the church meets on Sunday? Well, what you'll discover as you study the scripture is that the early church began to meet weekly on the 1st day of the week because that's the day that Christ rose from the dead. On Saturday He was in the tomb, on Sunday He had risen. So, though it's appropriate to worship & honor the Lord *everyday* of the week. We choose to meet corporately on Sunday because that's the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

Now there are a couple of things we want to note here. #1 According to Vs 2 they should've known that Jesus wouldn't be there when they went to His tomb because it tells us plainly that they came to the tomb when the "sun had risen"☺. (get it... sun...son)

But here's what we want to see, there wasn't so much as a single soul that had anticipated the resurrection of J.C. Even those closest to Him, who had been told by Him over & over again that He would be betrayed into the hands of the chief priests & scribes & they would condemn Him to death. That He would be delivered to the Gentiles where He would be mocked, scourged, spat upon & killed. But on the 3rd day He would rise again... Somehow & for some reason that never registered.

So here they are 1st thing Sunday morning, another gospel tells us that they headed out for the tomb while it was still dark, but we see here that by the time they got there, the sun had come up. But they had one chief concern... & The verb is imperfect, "They *kept* on saying among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" It's all they were talking about...

One thing we commend them for, even though there seemed to be an obstacle in the way, they wouldn't let that hinder them from pursuing their Lord, from fulfilling their ministry unto Him. So often, we can be discouraged when we hit what we believe to be a roadblock, we don't keep pressing forward we just give up & give in. These ladies weren't having that. It didn't matter if there was a 2-3000lb stone between them & Jesus something would have to relent but it wouldn't be them. They were going to find their way into His presence one way or another, retreat was not an option.

Let me tell you something (if you haven't figured it out already) there will always be something that tries to stand between you & Jesus. Purpose in your heart that it's not going to hinder *you*, but you're going to get rid of *it*. Whatever it is that's between you & Jesus, it has to go.

So here they are, they're downcast, they're downtrodden, they're depressed, they're walking w/their heads down & wondering who will roll away the stone for them... They fully expected Jesus to be there... The resurrection was the last thing on their mind; it wasn't even on the radar.

Vs 4-5

Ya think!? These ladies were freakin' out! & What we're going to see here is that the angel will invite them to come & see, & then before it's over he will exhort them to "go & tell". It's the message & the mission/mandate of every believer, it's not enough to come & see, now that you know that Jesus is alive, you've got to go & tell!

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. They looked up & immediately took note of the fact that the stone was rolled away. Listen, it wasn't rolled away so that Jesus could get out! Though He rose bodily, His *resurrection* body wasn't limited to the restrictions of the *natural* body. He could appear & disappear at will. **He could manifest Himself behind closed doors as though He walked right through the wall. This stone wasn't rolled away for Jesus' benefit, that stone didn't keep Him *in*, it kept them *out*. It was rolled away so they could get in there & see w/their eyes that He was no longer there. They were seeking the Living among the dead!**

Vs 6

"Come & see, inspect this place w/your own eyes. This is the place where they laid Him, He's not here, He is risen!" This angel gives to them the gospel. Jesus of Nazareth, delivered up for our transgression, raised for our justification. He points out plainly the contrast between what Jesus *was* & what Jesus *is*, He *was crucified* (which to say He was dead), but now He *is risen*, that is *alive*!

Now listen, this isn't speaking of resuscitation, but of resurrection. There are several examples in the bible of people being resuscitated before this... The widow's son in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24), probably the most famous account would be Lazarus found in Jn Ch 11. They were both brought back from the dead, but they weren't resurrected. We would classify them more as being resuscitated, why? Because even though they were dead & then brought back to life, they would die again in like manner. But resurrection goes way beyond just living again, the body receives a transformation of sorts, it's fit now for heaven & will never taste death again. Paul goes into great detail on this subject in 1 Cor 15. **He speaks there of the resurrection being like sowing a seed of grain or something. It goes into the ground one form & though it remains wheat (or whatever you planted), God gives it an entirely different body when it comes up.**

& He says, *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."*⁵

Right now, Jesus is the only one in heaven to have received His resurrection body. The bible declares that He is the 1st fruits of the resurrection. Now don't be confused, to be absent from the body is to be present w/the Lord. Your loved ones who knew the Lord are w/the Lord right now. But we receive our resurrection body when He comes again. That's what Paul was talking about when he wrote, *"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep* (or have died in Christ). *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will **rise** first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*⁶

That's not saying that their *soul* sleeps, it's saying their *body* does. When you die as a believer your spirit goes immediately into the presence of the Lord, but your body goes to the ground (or the crematorium, or wherever). But when the Lord returns; that's when the resurrection for all believers takes place. In other words when I die you'll be able to find my body (even though my spirit will be w/the Lord). But on the day the Lord returns for His church, go ahead & look in that coffin or whatever & it'll be empty, sown in corruption, raised in incorruption, sown in weakness, raised in power. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual *body*. Jesus rose in His resurrection body & that's why when I die my body will be available for all to see, but there was no body in Jesus' tomb when these ladies came to anoint Him because He rose in His resurrection body on the 3rd day.

Ok, what are the implications of the resurrection? Well for 1 we know that it means that the Father did not forsake His Son. We see the resurrection foreshadowed in multiple places throughout the scriptures one of which is where we read, *"For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."*⁷ The Father was faithful to the Son, did not forsake Him, but raised Him from the dead as He had promised.

The resurrection also assures us that death has been defeated. It's not the ultimate enemy that can never be overcome. But God gives us the victory through our Lord J.C. If God was faithful to raise Jesus then He will be faithful to raise us in Jesus.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 15:42-44]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Th 4:15-17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 16:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The resurrection means that God has a plan for you that goes beyond this world, even throughout eternity.

The resurrection proves that Christianity is completely different than any world “religion”. Christianity isn’t about what you know & what you do. It’s about *Who* you know & what *He did!*

The resurrection testifies to the fact that Jesus was indeed sinless, & that He died out of love & self-sacrifice to bear the guilt of *our* sin. If Jesus didn’t rise we’d never know if God truly accepted His sacrifice, but the resurrection puts Jesus in a category of His own & validates His sacrifice.

Vs 7-8

Or as we said earlier, they were freakin’ out! Now they didn’t say anything to anyone, but we’re to say something to everyone!

But here’s what we want to see here. It’s of note that the angel singled out Peter. “Go tell His disciples... & Peter...” *Listen, Peter was singled out not because he was like a prominent celebrity, but rather because of his personal vulnerability... He had boasted of his undying loyalty to Jesus the very night of His betrayal but had denied that he even knew Him 3x’s to save his own skin...*

But the Lord wanted him to know that He wasn’t finished w/him, that He still had a plan for him, even though Peter felt as though he could never face Him again. Listen, maybe that’s you today. *You’re here, doing your Easter duty, but somewhere in your heart you feel as though perhaps at one time you were serious about Jesus but after the things you’ve done, after the things you’ve said, it can never really be the same. Not really. Jesus calls to you personally, He gives to you the priority, He wants to forgive you, restore you & use you for His glory once again.*

Listen, every one of these disciples had completely failed Jesus. He had every right to be done w/them, but in His grace He invited them to come to Him, to meet w/Him, to be restored & used by Him to change the world. *Jesus invites you to times of refreshing today, repent of your sin, forget that which is behind you & press on to what lies ahead. Don’t look back & be held down by your past, look forward & commit your life fully to J.C. from this day forward.*

Vs 9-13

Isn’t that interesting? The very 1st skeptics of the resurrection were the disillusioned disciples themselves...

These were the guys who knew Jesus Personally, walked w/Him, heard Him, seen the miracles performed *by* Him, yet they didn't believe... Listen, the message you have *sounds* unbelievable, expect it to be met w/mockery & resistance. *The bible says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing... but to us who are being saved (1 Cor 1:18) it is the power of God. So don't be ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.*

It's not ours to concern ourselves w/how the message is seen, we're to make sure the message is shared.

Now we might think they didn't receive the message because it was coming from a group of hysterical women, but notice they didn't believe the 2 men whom He appeared to on the way to Emmaus either (we get the fuller account of those men in Luke's gospel). These guys were equal opportunity unbelievers☺!

Vs 14-15

Come & see, go & tell. Notice He didn't rebuke them for denying Him, for running in fear or any of that, only their unbelief, their hardness of heart in refusing to receive the message.

The resurrection separates humanity into 2 groups. Those who believe & those who don't, those who have hope, & those who are w/out hope being w/out God in the world. *Believe on the Lord J.C. who was crucified for our transgression & raised for our justification. That's the message we're to share, the focus of Vs 15 isn't on where we're to go, but what we're to do. Be it across the sea or across the street, we're to share the gospel.*

Rejoice in the reality of the risen Lord, don't be unbelieving, but believing... & God will do great things in *your* life for *His* glory. Amen?

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus we celebrate Your resurrection today. We thank You that You have so *loved* us that You've given Yourself *for* us & You conquered sin & death giving us the blessed assurance of the forgiveness of sin, everlasting life through faith in You. Lord we honor You, we worship You, we bow our hearts before You & give You praise.

Don't be unbelieving, but believing. God has loved you w/an everlasting love. & He demonstrated that love in that while you are still in your sin, Christ died for you. He paid a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay. Respond to His love today, turn from your sin & give your heart/life to J.C.