

The Servant-King's Resurrection; Mark 16:1-14

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Introduction

God is dead. God is dead! You might be thinking to yourself, no, no he is not. Well your bible says he is. And as we wrap up the book of Mark today I want to start us off by establishing those two facts. One, that Jesus, the main character of our story here in the book of Mark, claims to be, and is, God. And two, that according to our author, as of the end of the fifteenth chapter of his book, Jesus, God in the flesh, is dead.

Let's begin with number one. Jesus has claimed to be and others have declared him to be God. You don't have to keep up with me here in your bibles, but do listen hard, for establishing who Jesus is is critical to Mark's purpose in writing this book. Recall with me in chapter one verse one Mark calls him the "Son of God". Later in Chapter 3 "unclean spirits" declare him to be the "Son of God". And in chapter fifteen a centurion declares him to be the same. But most important of all at his baptism we hear the very voice of God declare, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased". We could stop there couldn't we?! We'll press our point home as we go on. Later in chapter one another unclean spirit declares him to be "the Holy one of God". In chapter two he forgives sins and the scribes with wrong hearts but right conclusions say, "Who can forgive sins but God alone"? Indeed! No one but God alone has the power to forgive sin. In Chapter four they ask, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him"? The conclusion being that only the maker of the wind and sea can command them to be still. In chapter five Legion refers to him as the "Son of the most high God". Amazing isn't it that the underworld knew more of God than the religious people of his day! In chapter eight Peter proclaims, "You are the Christ". In chapter nine God once again breaks through to pronounce, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him". In chapter ten blind Bartimaeus calls him "Jesus, Son of David". You might be saying to yourself, I thought he was the son of Joseph, but remember what God said in 2 Samuel, he said he would, "establish the throne of his kingdom forever" through the offspring of David...through the Son of David! And when the high priest asks him point blank in chapter fourteen, "'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?'" Meaning, are you the savior, the messiah, the anointed one? And Jesus simply replies, "I Am"! Jesus is God come to earth and Mark leaves you with no other option than to say to his assessment, AMEN! And AMEN!

Number two. We will save the ramifications of this until the end so hang with me, but the other major point here in the book of Mark is that Jesus will be killed. God will be killed. It doesn't take long for Mark to reveal the subplot. In chapter three we see that "The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." He has challenged their position in the culture and he has gone against the "tradition of men". A tradition they had a death grip on. We see again in chapter eleven that "the chief priests and the scribes...were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching." See again that Jesus is taking the audience away from them. He is stripping them of their power over people and they hate him for it. In chapter fourteen we see that "two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread...the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."" Oh they want him

dead now, but they fear their audience will be upset with them. This is serving self, not God, not others and the mere presence of the Servant King has them searching for ways to arrest and kill him.

You might rightly conclude that killing God is impossible if he doesn't want to be killed. If he is unwilling to go to the cross there is no chance they'll be able to take him there by force. You would be right, of course. But we see that he is willing. We even see him predict his own death three times before we arrive at the cross. God's word says this in chapter eight,

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....

He says this in chapter nine, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him..." And finally in chapter ten we hear him say,

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him..."

Be clear, the Servant King knows what is going to happen to him and he goes willingly to the cross. "No one takes [his life] from [him], but [he] lay[s] it down of [his] own accord."

This is where Mark has brought us. God is dead.

Please open your bibles to Mark chapter sixteen. [PAUSE] See the white space between Mark chapter fifteen verse forty-seven and chapter sixteen verse one? Do you know what that white space represents? That's Saturday. Our friends in our story are living in the cold empty loss of Saturday. They have fled the servant king's presence, they have denied that they know him and they are utterly in doubt as to what is going to happen next. The prevailing emotion of the day is fear. Fear for their safety. Fear for the future. And fear that the man they thought was God come to rescue them in some way, shape, or form is now laying lifeless in the back of a tomb. They...we...have killed God! As Pastor Dan pointed out last week the crucifixion was the climax of the book of Mark. He has made his point and now we will see what has become of the followers of Christ as the sun rises on Sunday morning.

You may be thinking this is going to be some great big celebration of Jesus overcoming sin, and death and Hell, but I want you to read and experience Sunday morning without your knowledge of the future. Try to experience the day's events as the people in our story did. Remember, these are real people with real lives who are in real danger. Some have families and friends who, if he really is dead, are going to be relentless with the "I told you so's". Some will have lost everything after leaving jobs and homes to follow Christ. What will they go back to? How can they go back at all after the last three years of friendship with the criminal Jesus who was nailed to a cross of shame. A trade for Barabas, the revolutionary. Maybe they'll think of you as the revolutionary next time and there will be no one to trade places with when your crucifixion date comes. This is the reality in the white space between fifteen and sixteen.

Let's pray and then we'll see what happens next.

God's word says this in verses one through four of chapter sixteen,

He is Risen! They are afraid (vs 1-8)

A Forbidding Stone

1When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.

We see as our text for this morning opens up that the only people who knew "where he was laid" (Mk 15:47), other than Joseph of Arimathea, are on the move. The Sabbath has past and our ladies are going to anoint the body of Jesus. Note that our first two verses give the Who What Where When and Why of any good news story. This would give pause to many early readers of the book of Mark because some of the details are not normal for the time. One that sticks out the most is that we are given the names of women. Women in New Testament times were not used as witnesses. Their testimony was not on the level of their male counterparts. So here again we see the upside down kingdom of God. Women will be the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection. This along with the use of their names are indicators of what Mark is doing. This cross, this death, this God, is real! These things happened and you can go ask these women about it.

One more thing though, notice the time of day. It's Sunday morning (the first day of the week) and "the sun had risen". Why is this important? Well, for one, it's the third day since the crucifixion and if they've been listening to Jesus, they would know something is up. Also, it's not dark out. There's going to be no problem seeing what's going on inside the tomb.

As a "bible reading" aside, notice the phrase in verse two "when the sun had risen". And tell me that little play on words wasn't intentional?! Do you think God knew how the Greek would translate into English?

These ladies aren't just walking along silently though. They have some business to attend to and they have the discussion of who is going to move this forbidding stone from in front of the tomb. Maybe the guards? Maybe we'll have to go back and find someone. Maybe....oh wait, look the stone has already been moved and just so you get it...it was VERY large. You can almost here Mark in the background whispering. God moved the stone, can't you? It's no accident that no one is outside saying, "good morning ladies, can I move this for you"? This is not about the power, strength or planning of human beings, this is about God. Can you see how these ladies might be a little taken back by this. Wasn't this tomb to be guarded? Who moved it? What's going on? And worse, what will we find in there? Have robbers come and taken him away? I can see them huddling up close to one another as they venture into the tomb, summoning up courage in numbers.

What going to happen next? God's word says this in verse five.

A Frightening Angel

5And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

Think about this with me for a moment. When you walk into a tomb, and I don't care if it's daylight or not, it has to be somewhat intimidating. Here you have before you a sort of u-shaped ledge and directly in front of you would have been the recently entombed. Only as they walk in they don't seem to notice the empty grave clothes, but their attention immediately goes to the alarming man in white on the right. The text says he's "sitting" there. That's disconcerting, no? God has been killed, you have gone to fulfill burial rights, and when you get there an "alarming" man dressed in a "white robe" has beat you to it, or what? Did you catch the grave robber in the act? Your mind flashes here, there and everywhere and you want an answer, but your fear has your tongue paralyzed and Mary is hanging on so tightly to your arm that your hand has gone numb. Well, they must have thought, we'll just listen.

And just in case you think their reaction is based in their femininity, please remember the reaction of the shepherds at Christ's birth announcement, they "were filled with great fear" (Luke 2:9) and Cornelius, a centurion, saw an angel and "stared at him in terror" (Acts 9:41). There are more examples, but you get the point. They aren't scared because they're women. They're scared because heaven has broken through to earth and when we humans see a piece of heaven, just a piece, it's so overwhelming as to be frightening, or as the text says, it's enough to make one, "alarmed".

And as messengers always do, this one has a message. God's word says this in verses six and seven,

6And 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. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

First and foremost, don't be alarmed. I'm not sure this ever helps in these sorts of situations. Never having been messaged by a heavenly being I can only imagine that it serves merely to lessen the fear of imminent death. Not much more. But there is more. He goes on to give them the greatest message ever. He's alive! He's not here! Look! Now go. Go tell them all and Peter. (and aren't we glad our denying friend is included here?) Go tell them he's going to do exactly what he said he would. God being a man of his word and all.

Now at this point, what would your reaction be? The alarming man in white has told you something wonderful and told you to go tell others. What do you do? What will our women do? They have witnessed the empty tomb of the risen savior and...

Look down in verse eight, God's word says this...

A Fearful Flight

8And 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.

Is this what you expected? Didn't you expect them to run off with great news and actually do what the messenger told them to do? It's not often you get a message from God, obedience would seem the appropriate action, but no. There is something else at work in our ladies hearts. See that word

“fled”? This is the same word used in chapter thirteen when Jesus tells them to flee the Abomination of Desolation. It’s the same word used in chapter fourteen when all of the disciples fled from Judas and “the chief priests and the scribes and the elders” at Jesus’ arrest. Also, when the young man “ran away naked”...same word. He fled. This is not just leaving, this is making an escape! This “trembling and astonishment” is something akin to terror. They are not rejoicing in the risen savior, they are running for their lives. Not only that, they completely disregard what the angel told them to do. They are silent. They do not go to the disciples and Peter to relay the great news. Sunday has come, God has moved the stone away and sent his messenger with great news. But the women have fled the tomb into the rising sun with fear in their hearts and no news on their lips. He has risen and they are afraid.

Surely this is a one time occurrence and when others find out they will certainly rejoice in the risen Savior. Look down at your bibles in verse nine. God’s word says this,

He is Risen! They will not believe (vs 9-11)

One Woman

9Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

Our Servant King, now risen has somehow come into contact again with Mary Magdalene. Again, Mark gives us her name and some background about her. He wants those listening to be sure of who this is. It’s as if he says, “Yes, yes, THAT Mary Magdalene, the one no longer possessed by demons”. They would definitely know who she was. And this time we see some hope in Mary’s response to seeing Jesus in person.

God’s word says this in verse ten,

10She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

Apparently seeing the Servant King with her own eyes has changed her. She goes and tells “those who had been with him” that he’s alive and she saw him with her own two eyes. Now, this is no empty tomb with a frightening messenger. This is the real deal God come to life. The reaction to this will surely be different. She is a trusted confidant who has been following and watching Jesus for some time. But we see at the end of the verse, “they would not believe it”. What!? This is not a doubt, or a concern about the validity of the story. “They would NOT believe it”. This was a choice made in the heart of men who believed God was dead and refused to believe otherwise. He is risen, but they will not believe.

You might be thinking things are a little bleak here today in our passage and you would be right. Fear and unbelief seem to have struck all of those closest to our Servant King. Will no one rise up and remember what the Lord had repeatedly told them.

You wouldn't dare think this today, but perhaps back in New Testament times a woman's word wasn't really believed. Maybe what we need here is a man...or two, to tell "the rest" about the risen servant king. Let's see. God's word says this in verses twelve and thirteen,

He is Risen! They still will not believe (vs 12-13)

Two Men

12 After these things she appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.

13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Okay, so, one woman or two men, it doesn't make any difference. It is interesting that when people see him face to face they suddenly believe what only moments before they did not. But absent a face to face with the Servant King they refuse to believe. These two gentlemen find themselves "walking into the country" when confronted by Jesus "in another form"; meaning somehow unrecognizable as Jesus. They don't believe until he reveals himself to them at which point they go back to Jerusalem (Luke 24) and tell "the rest" what they have seen. It makes no difference. Are you hearing this church. Eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ are coming back to them one after another with first hand accounts and they DO NOT believe. He is risen and the still do not believe.

What will it take for others to see? What is it that is keeping them from believing? Let's turn our attention once again to God's word. He says this in verse fourteen,

I Am Risen! They should've believed (vs 14)

The Servant-King

14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and herebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

At last the risen Christ appears to the eleven and I want you to note what is going on here. They have abandoned, denied and fled their Savior and now they are locked in a room "reclining at table"! Three people have come to them and reported that "He is risen"... but they have not!

And look what he says is the reason for his rebuke...."their unbelief and hardness of heart".

Like Thomas they would not believe until they saw him. The thought of God being dead was more than they could overcome. Their hard, unbelieving, hearts would not, overcome what their eyes had seen days before. He comes to them in what I can only imagine is a room with the shades pulled down, doors locked tight, permeated by the stale air of fear and unbelief and says to them...I am risen, you should have believed.

So what is Mark saying to us. This seems a disappointing way to end the book of Mark. All this fear and unbelief does not resonate with us two thousand years after the event. We know the rest of the story. We know the resurrection is real. We know Christ will ascend. We know the Spirit will come

down. But what are we to do with the book of Mark? Why does he leave us this way? What is his point?!

Conclusion: He's Alive! Do you believe?

Remember the climax of the book of Mark was, and is, the cross of Jesus. He is the Christ, The Savior, The anointed one, the Messiah. What will you do as result of his dieing on the cross to take your place? Will you flee the cross and the Savior in fear? Will you continue in your hardness of heart and your unbelief? Or will you listen to the Risen Christ and take up where our story here in the book of Mark has ended?

Hear again Church the words of your savior from the book of Mark, "...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it". I exhort you Church to take up your cross and follow the him. Lose your life. Give it all up for the Servant King who died on the the cross for your sins, and become the servant of all. For in the end your life will be saved and you will be rewarded with an eternity lived out in the presence of the Kings of the Jews, The Son of Man, The Lord Jesus Christ and isn't he the only one worth losing it all for?!

For those amongst us this morning who have never given you life to Christ I ask you to look to the cross, look to the empty tomb and find God. The one and only true God who would give it all up for you to die on a cross thereby taking your sin on himself while he had none to be punished for. Jesus asks this of you, "36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? What can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." I tell you be not ashamed of this Servant King, this Son of Man, this God murdered for your trespasses. Give your life to the Jesus Christ and gain him! Won't you give up all that you are, to be all that he wants you to be? Come to Christ. Believe what he has done on the cross, and be saved!