

On the Third Day, He Rose Again
Mark 15:40-16:8

Have you ever had your hopes dashed, only to later discovered that they weren't?

- I had forgot about this story until recently... Dr. Ray, GRE Score...

Many had hoped Jesus was the Messiah, but the cross shattered that dream for them.

- It looked like Jesus had utterly failed.
- (Many who deny the resurrection actually make that claim today – that Jesus was expecting an apocalyptic ending, but things fell apart at the end and he was tragically crucified).

But Jesus didn't fail!!! **He scored an A+ on the resurrection test!**

- His atonement on Friday was perfect; and on Sunday, he would step out into the sunlight as the resurrected Lord.
- Many whose dreams were dashed, would eventually find them renewed and expanded.

Let's have a look at this holy weekend.

Mark 15:40-16:8

Mark concludes his book with **another sandwich!**

- It's a story about the women followers of Jesus (the bread) interrupted by the story of Joseph of Arimathea asking for the body of Jesus (the filling).
- In each of the Gospels, the **women followers** of Jesus come to the tomb on Easter Sunday and find it empty.
- Women are witnesses to Jesus' death (15:40), his burial (15:47), and the empty tomb (16:6).
- We have already noted the significance of women in Mark's gospel.

As in the other sandwiches, Mark is showing something by the middle story – in this case, the **boldness of Joseph** (43) is contrasted with the **fear/timidity/shock of the women**.

The pattern is as follows:

A1 The Women at the Cross (15:40-41)

B Joseph of Arimathea Before Pilate (15:42-46)

A2 The Women at the Tomb (15:47-16:8)

Compare: (1) Both looking for something; (2) Both have a surprise, but (3) one is courageous and other fearful.

Verses 9-20 are not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.

- Mark's sudden ending was what he wanted.
- It makes clear that the disciples of Jesus were stunned/astonished by all of this.

The Fear of the Women

- At the cross they watch "from a distance" (15:40)
- On Easter, they are anxious about who will roll the stone away from the tomb (16:3),
- They are distressed (16:5)
- They are fearful (16:8)
- Rather than announcing the resurrection to the disciples as commanded by the angel, they flee and tell no one (16:8).

But we must point out that fear is better than absence!

- The disciples are not even around! They're hiding.
- These women love Jesus – but are distressed, shocked, fearful...
- They need time to collect their thoughts.
- God's holiness often leads people in the Bible to shock and awe.
- We must sympathize with them. They're at least there!!!
- They didn't know the whole story yet.... So they're not villains!

#1: The Women at the Cross (15:40-41)

These women looking on with love.

40: Mark mentions three of them:

- **Mary of Magdala** whom Jesus had delivered from demonic possession (Luke 8:2).
 - What a story she would have to tell.
 - **I never get over hearing people's testimonies. (Ex: Amber)**
- A second **Mary who had two sons named James and Joses.**
- **Salome** who is only mentioned by name in Mark (15:40; 16:1)

41: These and "many other women" (41) were faithful to Him.

- They were true disciples (v. 41).
- They were eyewitnesses to His death and burial (v. 47).
- Their "following and ministering to [Jesus]" from "Galilee ... to Jerusalem" encompasses the duration of his ministry.
 - The imperfect tenses of both verbs in Greek indicate not occasional or sporadic accompaniment and service, but the continued presence and service to Jesus.

Faith and followers come from unlikely quarters.

- A Roman centurion makes the first Christian confession.
- Women... and now, Joseph of Arimathea.

#2: Joseph Before Pilate (15:42-46)

Jesus is clearly dead.

- **John 19:34:** "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear" just to be certain.
- Normally, after crucifixion, the body would be left on the cross **to rot or be eaten by dogs or birds.** The remains would be thrown into the Valley of Hinnom.
 - This is the view of certain skeptics – that his body was eaten by dogs ([Crossan](#))

42-43: Jesus' situation would be different for two reasons:

- (1) Jewish law demanded that even executed criminals receive a proper burial and that those hanged on a tree be taken down and buried before sunset (Deut 21:23)
- (2) Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus' body (v. 43).

Joseph of Arimathea

- **Luke 23:51** Joseph of Ar. **did not support the Council's decision to seek Jesus' execution.**
- John says he was a covert **"disciple of Jesus"** ([John 19:38](#); cf., [Matt 27:57](#)).
 - Not all Jewish religious authorities opposed Jesus.
- **He's clearly moved by the crucifixion, and so in love and boldness he makes this appeal.**

43: He's a model disciple:

1. First, Joseph is **"waiting for the kingdom of God."** – Not a political leader.

- This means more than that he was a pious Jew waiting for the Messiah.
 - **He believed he found it in this man!**
2. Joseph also **“went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.”**
- It Jesus was executed as an enemy of Rome! You don’t sympathize with someone who was an enemy of the Rome! This takes great courage.
3. Mark paints Joseph as a leader of **the Jews**. His devotion to Jesus – and the devotion of the Roman Centurion – shows us that Jesus is the Savior of **both Jew and Gentile**.

44: Pilate was **surprised** to hear that Jesus died so quickly.

- Often, the crucified one would suffer a long time on the cross.

45: Pilate granted permission.

46: Joseph wrapped the Savior up and put Him in **his own tomb (a big tomb; you can walk in it)**.

- This is a very **important detail** for giving reason to believe in the resurrection account.
- It’s also a fulfillment of prophecy (**Isa 53:9**)

46b: Then “he rolled a stone against the entrance.” (cf., 1 Cor 15:3-5)

#3: The Women at the Tomb (15:47-16:8)

47: Mark returns to the women.

Two of the women mentioned at the cross are present to watch Joseph bury Jesus.

- **Mary Magdalene** and “Mary the mother of Joses.”
- **Mary appears** in the following verse as the mother of James.
 - This is doubtlessly **the same Mary** mentioned in 15:40.
- They **“saw”** where Jesus was buried.
 - The word for “saw” is the same as that for **“watch” in v. 40**, that is, **guarded observation**.

16:1: The Sabbath was the final day of the week for the Jews.

- Sunday was designated as the first day of the new week, or “the first day of the Sabbath” (v. 2)...
- **This specifies Sunday as the day of Jesus’ resurrection.**
- The purpose of anointing **wasn’t to embalm**, but to **perfume the decaying corpse as an act of love**.
- The anointing of the women lends **new significance** to the earlier **anointing in Bethany (14:3–9)**.
 - Her action was a prophetic sign of [Jesus’] death.
 - The women’s is made impossible because of his resurrection.”

2–4: Sunrise

- Mark notes the **sunrise** perhaps to insure that the women had not mistaken the tomb in the darkness.
- It may also picture **the dawning of a new humanity**.
- **In the Bible, God’s help often comes in the morning (Ps 30:5; 59:16; 90:14; 143:8). Here is Mega Help!**
- Only here in Mark do we find a conversation about **who will roll the big stone away**.
 - They can’t ask the disciples to help **because they’re hiding!**
 - They will soon discover that **their problem will be supernaturally solved!**
 - They will be **witnesses, not workers**. These women don’t lift a finger!

5: Entering the tomb, the women saw “a young man dressed in a white robe.”

- The word for **“alarmed”** (*ekthambeomai*, v. 5) is found only in Mark, means both **fear and wonder, astonishment and distress**; the same word is used in 14:33 of Jesus’ distress in Gethsemane.
- The **position of the angel** “on the right side” of the tomb, a detail without apparent significance, and speaks of an **eyewitness testimony**.
- The Greek word for **“angel”** literally means **“messenger (of God)”**. That’s his role exactly.

6: The Message

- The first word is **a word of comfort**: “Don’t be alarmed.”
- **The second point**, “You seek Jesus,” is **a mild rebuke**.
 - **They’re on a funeral errand with all the spices in their hands!**
 - **But this is no time to mourn, but a time to celebrate!**
 - “The visit to the tomb is vintage Markan irony: the living are consumed with death, but the Crucified One is consumed with life.” (Edwards)
- The third word is a **massive word of hope!** “...He has risen. He is not here...”
 - “was raised” instead of “has risen” (NIV) implies that he was resurrected by God.
- The fourth word is **a word of evidence**. “See the place where they laid him.”
 - **Examine it!** The tomb is empty.
 - The women are not directed to a mystical experience, but to **history, facts**.
 - **Jesus was put “here” but he is not “here” any longer!**
 - He has been **raised bodily!**
- **Belief in Jesus requires faith, but it’s not a blind faith.**
 - **We don’t move from history to unicorns! This is one continuous, historical story.**

Therefore, the first place the gospel is preached is from the empty tomb itself, by this angelic messenger!

- **The crucified one has been raised!**
- **A new order of existence is inaugurated! A new age has dawned.**

7: The angel’s final word to the women is... (read)

- Note for now that Jesus – who leads the way to the cross – **lead the way after his resurrection.**
- **Galilee** plays a privileged role in Mark’s Gospel.
 - Capernaum in Galilee is Jesus’ chosen residence, where he did much of his ministry.
 - The disciples calling **began** there and it will be **completed** there.
 - It is in Galilee that the disciples **will see Jesus and the pieces will come together.**
 - **Jesus will heal them from spiritual blindness.**

8: The ending of the gospel of Mark.

- **In abrupt objectivity, Mark says that they fled from the tomb, seized with fear and bewilderment.**
- **Mark started abruptly and he ends abruptly. No elegant prologue or ending, like in John.**

The women are **overwhelmed by it all**. They too need additional light to make sense of everything...

- They said **nothing to anyone**. A reversal of what has been happening in Mark!
- They’re **stunned**. You would be too!
 - **Half court shot vs. Guy levitating up to the rafters...**
- They are **wrestling with what this all means**.

We know the rest of the story: **These ladies eventually did go speak!**

But Mark doesn’t include it because he’s trying to provoke a response.

How do you like stories to end?

- **Kimberly and I differ on endings. Maybe it’s because I’m younger!!!**
- I believe **this is exactly how Mark wants it to end.**
- We are left with a **cliffhanger**, a bit like the book of Acts.

I think Mark wants the readers to **contemplate their own personal response**.

- Hooker, [Mark's method has been to] "leave his readers to make the crucial step of faith."
- Garland, "The ending goads the reader to react.... When presented with this ending, we must ask, 'What happened? What will happen?' We must also go to Jesus and not only tell about his resurrection but tell the entire story from the beginning."

How should we respond to the resurrection?

We must believe and act. But why and how?

Let me give you three specific **directives** related to the empty tomb.

#1: Let the Evidence Challenge Your Mind

"You seek Jesus ... *He has risen*; he is not here" (15:6)

This is the resurrection announcement.

The new temple is being raised up on the third day (**14:58; 15:29**).

And this confronts our skepticism.

There are three things skeptics often say: (1) Jesus was *just another Messianic figure*, (2) The Gospels *are Myth*, (3) Primitive people believed everything, including the miraculous.

Objection #1: "Jesus was just another Messiah"

Before Jesus' incarnation there *were dozens of Messianic movements*.

- But each time the Messianic figure like this died, **the movement died**.

But in 200 years, Christianity basically took over the Roman Empire.

- The skeptic can't ignore this "*circumstantial evidence*."
- The church exploded.
- The disciples *were transformed immediately*.

What made this movement difference? The Messiah rose from the dead!

- From a purely historical perspective, you have to ask, *what happened?*

"As a historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him." -- NT Wright

Objection #2: Literary Argument: "The Gospels are myths/legends"

Skeptics say, "We don't know what happened. We can't believe these four Gospels.

They were written many years after the death of Jesus from second and third hand sources.

They're legends."

Mark challenges you.

- In **15:40, 47, 16:1**, Mark writes down the names of these women who saw the empty tomb.
- **3 times in 8 verses**. The whole text speaks of eyewitness detail.

So why does he write their names down, three times? (2 Reasons)

1. This is how first century historians wrote, not legend writers.

Richard Bauckham in his book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, explains the four Gospels are closely based on eyewitness testimony of those who knew Jesus.

- He tells us that this passage does **not AT ALL resemble a legend**.
- Mark bears all the **marks of an ancient historian**.

Ancient historians gave more weight to *still living eyewitnesses* than written documents or any other source of proof.

- "saw" "see" in each of the Gospels.

Greeks, Romans, Papias & others all valued still living eyewitnesses who were **personally involved participants** for history writing.

Mark collected from eyewitnesses and wrote his work, mainly from apostles, and primarily from Peter, but *they flee in ch 14*, then we have the curious mentioning of Simon and his two sons Alexander and Rufus, then the women.

- Named people are not there by accident.
- Why?
- They were there, involved participants remember details!
- And if the eyewitnesses were still around, you could go ask them!
- You could **cross-examine** them.
- You could put one in one room, and one in another and ask them questions to see if their story matched up.

"Eyewitnesses were always the source of choice for history."

Throughout Mark, he is naming. Why is he doing this? They are the marks of history.

- They are like *footnotes, Citations*.

2. He writes down their names because if you were making this up, to convince the ancient world, you wouldn't make women as the eyewitnesses... unless it happened like this.

Further proof, **Celsus**, a Greek pagan philosopher, in 2nd century was opposed to Christianity.

- Here was one of his main arguments: **One of the reasons, we know that it can't be true is that it is based on the testimony of women!** "We all no women are hysterical."
- He referred to "the gossip of women about the empty tomb."

Why did he say this? IN ancient cultures, **women were marginalized**.

But you know what this means?

- They would not have used women.... **UNLESS IT HAPPENED LIKE THIS.**
- Also consider **Mary Magdalene**. If the account was fabricated, you would not have this lady as your witness - **unless it happened!**

"Christians just believe what they've been told... They should examine... So should the skeptic."

Objection #3: Miracle Argument

"These people were primitive people; gullible, first century people. We modern people can't believe in miracles."

Mark tells us repeatedly that Jesus **predicted his death**.

- Jesus kept saying, "on the **third day**, on the third day."
- Notice that **IT IS THE THIRD DAY**. Is everyone believing? NO!

The **ladies** were bringing spices to anoint the body.

- They **weren't expecting the resurrection!**
- **Verse 3**, "who is going to roll away the stone?"
- They spent a fortune on these spices.

The disciples went home! John tells us they were hiding.

This is strange! ...“Hey, it’s the third day. Shouldn’t we go take a look? It can’t hurt!”

- Not ONE disciple is present!

So, was it gullible people who didn’t know any better believing in the resurrection?

- No. Notice the Angel – “**He told you**” (7) – yet, they aren’t expecting it.

They were just as skeptical as modern man, and maybe more so.

- **Greek and Romans** didn’t believe in Resurrection. They believed that you needed to be separated from your body.
- **Jewish people** believed in a **final resurrection** when the entire world was resurrection, not many believed in a personal, bodily resurrection.
 - Beyond that, **no Jew was ready to worship a man as God**, but they did!
 - Because they let the evidence speak to them.

C.S. Lewis says we are all tempted of “**chronological snobbery.**”

- We want to think that *the past was less intelligent, able than the present.*
- Don’t be a chronological snob. Don’t be lazy.

"I can't believe in resurrection because those things don't happen."

Exactly! That's why it's a big deal!

See, the resurrection is not just **a nice symbol**; it is historical.

At some point you have to make a decision on Jesus.

- To just be on a “journey” is a nice excuse for not commit to anything.
- To never land anywhere means you don’t have to commit to anything.

#2: Let His Grace Change Your Heart

“Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee”

- These disciples **turned their back on Jesus!**
- Yet, he says, “I’ll see them in Galilee”

Notice **what he does NOT say**:

- “I will settle the score in Galilee”
- “Tell those faithless, backstabbing guys I might reinstate you.”
- “If you straighten up then I may see you”

“And Peter.” Only Mark’s Gospel includes this.

- Because Mark’s Primary source is Peter.
- Peter never got over this!

Why include this?

- **A Practical Purpose:** So Peter would know to go to Galilee with the others.
- **A Gospel Purpose:** The **Gospel is about the forgiving grace of Jesus; it’s NOT** “clean your life up, straighten up, fly right, *maybe God will accept you.*”

John 21 shows us how it happened – breakfast with Jesus. He’s restored!

- Jesus alone has the authority to forgive and the grace to forgive.

- The people of God are recipients of grace. (Ps 130).

“AND PETER” gives us hope!

“And Peter” - Put your own name in there - **“and Tony”**

Screwtape, “The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact, the resurrection, & a single theological doctrine, redemption.”

“those who are forgiven much, love much” (Lk 7:47).

Peter becomes the preacher grace, writer of grace.

- 1 Peter 5:10 - “God of all grace”
- 2 Peter 3:18 - “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- 1 Peter 5:5 - “God gives grace to the humble”

The Grace of Jesus gave Peter **humility and boldness** at the same time.

- **That’s what the Gospel does.**
- **The more you know and love the Gospel, the more humble you become, and the more fearless you become.**

Do you know this grace?

- Can you say like Peter, “I am a failure.” **“I have nothing to bring to Jesus. I admit that I need his forgiveness and grace?”**
- Will you see that you are not saved by **your work and your Past** but **Christ’s work and His Past?**

Luther said we experience grace in 3 ways: “Once for all, again and again, and more and more.”

Don’t just be stirred by his grace, be changed by His grace.

#3: Let His Mission Consume Your Life

The resurrection inspires personal hope and fuels our mission.

Death is not the end. God will renew the world. God will give us new bodies.

Joni Eareckson Tada, Christian author/radio host is a quadriplegic, was in an accident when 18 years old. Paralyzed from neck down; in a wheel chair. She described the grief and then the joy that she experienced one day in worship at a conference. The worship leader asked the people, some 600, to kneel in prayer. She says:

Sitting there, I was reminded that in heaven I will be free to jump, dance, kick and do aerobatics. And although I’m sure Jesus will be delighted to watch me rise on tiptoe, there’s something I plan to do that may please him more. If possible, somewhere, sometime before the party gets going, sometime before the guests are called to the banquet table at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the first thing I plan to do on resurrection legs is to drop on grateful, glorified knees. I will quietly kneel at the feet of Jesus.... And afterword, I shall spring to my feet, stretch out my arms, and shout out to anyone within earshot of the whole universe “Worthy the lamb.”

Elsewhere she says:

I can’t wait for the day when I’m given my brand new glorified body. I’m going to stand up, stretch, dance, kick, do a aerobics, comb my own hair, blow my own nose, and what is so poignant is that *I’ll finally be able to wipe my own tears, but I won’t need to, because the Bible tells us in the book of Revelation that God will personally wipe away every tear.*

The Gospel promises new bodies, new hope...

“I can still hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in Righteousness-powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone who is spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who has cerebral palsy, is brain-injured, or has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the message of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope!”

Rom. 8:18 - “I consider the sufferings of this present world not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

We are a people of the resurrection! This inspires personal hope and motivates us for mission.

The resurrection means we have *meaningful work to do*

Go tell this good news!

- We have been entrusted with the message of the resurrection.
- **How can we keep silent?**
- Go fight the brokenness of this world. Go speak the good news.

Work until God makes all things new!

- In 1 Cor 15, Paul spent 57 vs on the resurrection. How does he end? **V. 58.**

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (58)

The resurrection changes everything.

The tomb is empty. Just as He said.