

Theme: Mark's cryptic, unusual ending to His Gospel is a call for us to overcome fear and to share the Good news of the resurrection and the message of grace and restoration, knowing that God will accomplish His work despite our wavering faithfulness.

## I. Controversial Endings

- A. The Sopranos is one of the highest-rated shows ever
- B. But the last episode was controversial - loved & hated!
- C. Mark's Gospel has a controversial end at v8!
- D. Some scribes even added later verses (After Hours)
- E. What is Mark communicating by this unusual ending?

## II. A Trip To the Tomb

- A. The women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' corpse  
When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" Mark 16:1-3
  - 1. The same women who observed the crucifixion and saw the corpse laid in the tomb go back to the same tomb to anoint Jesus' corpse (see Mark 15:40, 47).
  - 2. After Sabbath ended on Saturday night they bought spices which would be used to anoint the body.
  - 3. The Sabbath of rest had prevented them from anointing Jesus the day before, so they were going at sunrise on Sunday when there was light to see.
  - 4. This "anointing" was not to embalm the corpse but to perfume it so it would not smell bad as it rotted.
  - 5. This certainly showed their devotion to Jesus.

- B. The women clearly do not expect the resurrection!  
When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" Mark 16:1-3
  - 1. They are going to anoint His corpse - they think He is dead and His body is rotting.
  - 2. They are concerned about the stone being removed
    - a. Normally the male disciples would move it - but they all deserted Jesus and are in hiding!
    - b. At least the women were brave enough to do this, even ion the men were not there to help out!
    - c. But they have NO expectation that the stone will have been rolled away by the power of God!
    - d. They have NO expectation that Jesus' body will have been raised from the dead and no longer be there!
  - 3. The lack of understanding of the women and the disciples is crystal clear in these historical events!

## III. The Surprise At the Tomb

- A. The stone rolled away and someone alive in the tomb  
But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. Mark 16:4-5
  - 1. When they arrive the stone has already been rolled away! How did this happen?

2. They enter the tomb to anoint the corpse
  - a. Tombs were large cutouts with a square entrance about 2 feet high, and then a couple of rooms inside, with another small door from the first room into the small burial chamber.
  - b. The corpse would be laid on a flat cutout just big enough for the body.

3. Inside they see a “man” - but it is not Jesus!

- a. They see a “young man” dressed in white seated at the right side of where Jesus’ body had been laid.
- b. This “young man” is clearly an angel
  1. Angels are often described as looking like men (Daniel 10; Josephus; Maccabees)
  2. White clothes often associated with heaven & angels
  3. They are alarmed - a common response to angels
  4. The young man acts as a messenger - which is what the word angel actually means!
  5. Matthew tells us it was an angel! (Matthew 28:1ff)

B. Jesus is not here - He has risen!

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” Mark 16:6-7

1. The angel tells them not to be alarmed/afraid
2. He tells them he knows they are seeking Jesus
  - a. This is actually a mild rebuke to them.
  - b. Almost every time the word “seek” is used in Mark it is for seeking the wrong thing.

- c. They are looking for Jesus because they think He is still dead - but He is not!
- d. “Just as He told you” - Jesus had told them He would be raised on the third day! So why would they think His corpse would be there?

3. The angel is clear - Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, dead, and buried - but the same Body that was crucified, dead, and buried has been raised from the dead!
4. These women are given the privilege to be the first people told of the resurrection as an accomplished fact!

C. The call to share the news of the resurrection and the message of grace and restoration

“But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” Mark 16:7

1. These women are given the privilege and call to tell others of the joyous news of the resurrection!
2. They are also given a message of grace - tell the disciples and Peter they abandoned Jesus but He has not abandoned them!
3. Jesus had told them (Mark 14:28) that He would meet them in Galilee after the resurrection, and the angel reiterates this promise.
4. Peter is specifically mentioned - his denial of Jesus has not cast him away, for he too will be restored.
5. What an astounding message of grace! The failure and denial of Peter and the other disciples does not have the last word - God does, and it is a word of grace and restoration!

## IV. A Surprise Ending

### A. We expect to read about the women's obedience

1. Surely they will go forth and boldly share this wonderful news of the resurrection!
2. Surely they will go forth and share this message of grace and restoration!
3. The disciples have failed throughout the Gospel, but surely they will become bold faithful, unwavering followers now that they know Jesus is risen!

### B. The women's fear and failure

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. Mark 16:8

1. The women rush away filled with fear and they don't tell anyone because of their fear!
2. Mark uses 6 words to show their fear and failure
  - a. Trembling, bewildered, went out, fled, said nothing, afraid - these all convey a sense of fear and failure!
  - b. The word 'fled' is the same one to describe the disciples fleeing in the garden to abandon Jesus!
  - c. This is not what we expected!
3. What in the world is Mark conveying by this ending?

### C. Understanding the Surprise Ending

1. As always, Mark is shorter than the other Gospels and they supplement what we have here.
2. Mark's first readers were under intense persecution and probably filled with fear - he wanted to teach them something by this ending.

3. Obviously, they first readers of Mark's Gospel and we know that the women did eventually obey, that the disciples did see Jesus, and that Peter and the others were restored - or else the Gospel would never have been written for Christianity would not have survived!
  - a. If they had not told the disciples, no one would have known!
  - b. We know Peter was restored - and was the source of this Gospel!
  - c. We know the faith and the Good News of the Resurrection not only survived, it thrived and spread throughout the whole world!
4. But all of this did not happen because of the faithfulness of the women, or the disciples, or those coming after - it happened because of the faithfulness of God!
5. Throughout the Gospel the disciples have been bewildered, confused, fearful, disobedient, and unfaithful - but Jesus successfully completed His mission anyway!
6. Mark is letting us know that the accomplishment of the mission after the resurrection will still not be due to human faithfulness but rather to the faithfulness and power of God!
7. Thus, the ending to Mark's Gospel serves as a challenge and an encouragement - a challenge for us not to let fear prevent us from sharing the Good News we have been given, but an encouragement that God will accomplish His work even though our faithfulness is halting and uneven.

## V. Applying the Word

### A. A call to faith

1. Jesus Who died and was buried has been raised!
2. He has conquered death, and He offers forgiveness to You!
3. Do not doubt - the tomb is empty and life is freely offered to you!

### B. A call to share the Good News

1. Like the women at the tomb, we have been given Good News - Jesus is risen, conquering death!
2. Like the women at the tomb, we have been given Good News - God forgives sin and restores those who look to Him for mercy!
3. Our culture tries to hide from death or to think that we will technologically solve death, but this is all fool's gold!
4. But we have good news to share - the tomb is empty for Jesus has risen!
5. As we go forth, do we do this with joy to share the Good News, or do we sneak out afraid to share the Good News?
6. Of all people, we should be bold - we have approval from God and ETERNAL life that no one can take from us!

### C. Two words of encouragement for the mission

1. God calls unlikely disciples to His work!
  - a. No one but God would have chosen the Twelve!

- b. The Roman centurion is the first to embrace the Gospel after Jesus' death
- c. A member of the Sanhedrin is a disciple!
- d. The first witnesses are women - who were not even considered worthy to be witnesses in court!
- e. You may feel unqualified to share the Good News with others - but God has called you to Himself!
- f. It is not your qualifications that will enable you to serve God and share with others - it is the Spirit and His equipping!

### 2. God's Kingdom will grow and His Word spread

- a. We need to strive to be faithful - but thankfully the work does not hang on our faithfulness but God's!
  - b. You may feel the odds are stacked against the Church and God's Kingdom today, but it was far worse in the 1<sup>st</sup> century - and yet they prevailed!
  - c. You may feel like the disciples did on Good Friday, but Easter Sunday is always coming!
  - d. Be encouraged - when all is said and done and the dust clears, the Kingdom will come, God's will is going to be done, and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!
  - e. Be encouraged - an innumerable multitude from every tribe and language is being called - and they will come and will surround the throne on that final day!
3. Mark's cryptic, unusual ending to His Gospel is a call for us to overcome fear and to share the Good news of the resurrection and the message of grace and restoration, knowing that God will accomplish His work despite our wavering faithfulness.

#### D. The Table of the Faithful God

1. Here we are reminded that our unfaithfulness led to Good Friday and the death of Jesus
2. here we are reminded of the faithfulness of God that led to the resurrection that first Easter Sunday!
3. Here we open ourselves to the Spirit's ongoing work so that we can be part of the never-ending story of God's Kingdom growing!

#### He Has Risen!

Mark 16:1-8

April 20, 2025

Communion

Hebrews 13:20-21

Teaching keywords: Easter; resurrection; fear; evangelism and missions; sovereignty of God; biblical characters

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

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