

# The Resurrection

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's go back to chapter 16 of Mark's Gospel. It's the last chapter in Mark. It's not the last chapter for us, because we've got something to go back to after Easter sometime.

But can I just remind you, you'll be fed up of hearing this if you've come to church over the last few Sunday mornings. But if you haven't, it may be worth bearing in mind. That Mark, in writing his Gospel, is in a hurry.

Mark writes this Gospel quickly. He doesn't have much time for a lot of detail, and he's gone straight to Jesus' public ministry, and that thing about his birth and his upbringing, straight to Jesus' three years of ministry, and then a whole lot of detail in his death, and then briefly also in his resurrection. And he's wanting always, isn't he, you could probably tell this to me now, what's he wanting to do? He's wanting to challenge us about what we think of Jesus. He's giving us a really challenging view of Jesus, and he also wants us to be challenged about ourselves as well, so that we begin to see ourselves as God sees us, and see Jesus as he is, as he's revealed.

So if we come to this early stage, or this early part of the chapter, and of course, you all know, as I mentioned last Sunday evening, that I got my timetable slightly wrong last Saturday, it was Thursday evening, and then Friday, rather than Friday evening, then Saturday, in terms of the crucifixion weekend, it was the changing of the clocks, as I said, did something wrong.

[ 1 : 3 2 ] But it was, for all, there's even, even in the text, there's a sense of slight confusion, the confusion.com, because it's been such a bizarre and odd weekend for them, and Mark's trying to grasp that, it's been a confusing and a difficult and a roller coaster weekend if you have experienced the death of someone close that was unexpected.

It wasn't unexpected for Jesus, and despite telling the people and his disciples many times, it seemed to be unexpected to them and his followers still. So when that happens, when death comes into your experience like that unexpectedly, just everything goes upside down, doesn't it?

And you seem to lose track of time. I mean, what days is between the death and the funeral, and the things I've got to do, and all the difficult things that happen around that time.

And that seems to be what's happening during these days when Jesus is taken from them quickly, and then there's this mock trial, and then he's crucified. And then we come to the account of the resurrection and the women at the tomb.

And it's such a dramatic conclusion, these last nine verses. And I'm gonna say that these are the last nine verses, most conservative scholars who look at the Bible today would agree with that, that the Mark's account finishes at verse nine, and as the new international version states there, that the early manuscripts and other ancient ones do not have Mark 16 to nine, 16 verses nine to 20.

[ 3 : 0 6 ] It would seem that they were added at some later stage because people weren't happy with the abruptness of the end. But I think the abruptness of the end is absolutely in fitting with the writing of Mark, with the style of Mark, and with what he's trying to achieve.

But it is an unusual ending, isn't it? They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid, but I'll come to that in a little minute. But I wonder if you were looking at this account, what would be some of the things that come into your mind that stick out, that really stick out to you from the text?

I wonder would it be worth asking that for a minute or two this morning? What are some of the things that stick out to you in this text? Is anyone gonna be willing to say anything? If you look, it's only nine verses. What do you see there that you think, wow, that's amazing.

Or that's not what I expected. Or if you were gonna preach a sermon, what would you pick out as some of the important things in this passage? Can you think of them quickly? Resounding silence. Okay, right. He's risen, he's risen. He okay, thanks Peter. He's risen, he's not here. That would certainly be one of them, wouldn't it? Anything else? He's risen, he's risen.

[ 4 : 18 ] Yep. You will see him just as he told you. Anything else? He mentioned Peter, he mentioned Peter. Okay, excellent.

Yeah, he mentions Peter. Okay, well I've taken four things. I'm sure there's many more. But just briefly as we go into it, four things that stand out from this passage, that fit in with Mark's teaching and with what he's trying to get across.

And there's a challenge to us as we take the Spirit of God and allow the Spirit to challenge us from the Bible. The first thing is these great loyal but misguided women.

In case you've got this account of the women going to the tomb on the first day of the week. Now of course, we know that and we've probably said that a lot from a historical point of view and from an evidential point of view.

If this was being written to Jewish society and it was made up, it's very unlikely that they would have chosen women to be the first witnesses to the resurrection harsh.

[ 5 : 23 ] But true, they weren't regarded as credible witnesses in the court of law. And so it's unlikely that if you were just making up for this because well, we dreamt about Jesus raising from the dead, wouldn't it be nice if he was a risen savior?

Wouldn't it make a great religion for 2,000 years? Well, let's make up the story. It's unlikely if that was the case that they would have chosen women to be the first evidences, the first people who saw the risen savior.

But nonetheless, in this ring of truth about the women going to the tomb, we see that God's a convention breaker.

As he reminds us that they were loyal, they were last at the cross. But they were also first at the tomb because women play such a huge and significant part in Jesus' life and in the life of the church.

Equal in God's eyes, image bearers in God's eyes, but nonetheless with different roles through life and history. But the women here probably are not dissimilar to the men of the time.

[ 6 : 39 ] They seem to go to the tomb without any expectation. Now, I don't believe that's entirely the case because of the question they ask.

They ask the question, who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb? Now, to me, that suggests they are thinking potentially, possibly something unusual might have happened.

Because it was a huge stone. It was sealed by the Roman authorities and it would be hugely difficult to move. And yet they're almost saying, I wonder if someone will be there.

I wonder if something will have happened. Maybe I'm wrong in that. Certainly the question begs that they may, hoping beyond hope, think that something, because Jesus was unusual to them and he would surprise them, something would have happened.

But spiritually they don't have any faith really. They don't have any assurance that Jesus will be alive. They're still going, the tombstones to be rolled away and they're going there to anoint his body with spices.

[ 7 : 59 ] They, the disciples of the day and us, they and us, we need God to open our hearts, to understand and to recognize a crucified and risen Savior.

I wonder in a very different way if you've come today to church and Jesus is dead to you, to all intents and purposes. You've come to a best, get a history lesson, at worst to be bored out of your head for an hour, but not to meet with the living God through Jesus Christ.

Because to you, Jesus dead, just as he was to the women who were going to the tomb. And that's the reality, isn't it? That they and the disciples, and we need to be met with by the living God and we need him to change our hearts, to give us the faith to understand and to believe and to know this great truth.

And so they get to the tomb and there's an angel there. We're not told that here. We glean that from the other accounts. It's a man, he looked like a person.

And he says these amazing words, he is not here. He is risen, he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

[ 9 : 23 ] So just as there was an angelic message when Jesus was born, so that the heavens were opened and all the angels poured out, spilled out of heaven and announced this great coming of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

So at his resurrection, there also needs to be a heavenly interpretation so that people know what has happened. That they know Jesus Christ has risen.

These are the three words that really have changed the world. He is risen, just as he told you. I think that's significant, it's interesting that the angel wants to remind them that he had told them previously that he was risen.

How many times did he told them? Three times it's recorded that Jesus explained to him to the disciples and their followers that he would go to Jerusalem, he would there die.

And on the third day be raised again. It just was like water off a duck's back. What's he on about? Did they hear it at all? Were they listening? Was it just so unbelievable that they saw he's out of his mind?

[ 10 : 31 ] But just as he told you, he's risen. This marks reminding us again, isn't it? He wants to firm it clearly and strongly in our minds that this was Jesus' task, that this is what he'd come to do, that this was always his intention.

This is the Gospel Mark 1, chapter 1 of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And he goes straight into telling us why he came and why he needed to come and why he was going to die and why he would be raised from the dead.

And this is the message and it hasn't changed. Gospel message. Because we know that there's one ultimate defeat that we all have to face.

And sometimes when you support a club like I support you, you get a lot of defeat. But you know, there's a much, much, much more real defeat that every one of us faces, none of us can cheat that day, the day of our death.

That's the ultimate defeat, isn't it? Defeats all of us, the seven billion will be defeated by that.

Therefore, the ultimate victory, it's got to be resurrection, hasn't it?

[ 11 : 52 ] It's got to be the defeat of death. That's the ultimate victory. Now that has always been, despite man's striving, that's always been beyond us, but it is not beyond God because he's the author of life.

He is life. So we see this amazing reality. And can I just unpack just for a moment, as he has risen, why it's so important?

And from Acts chapter two, Peter recognized it was so important. And he says in Acts 2, 23, 24, that death could not hold him. See, that's why it's important.

Now I know we struggle with this concept, and a lot of people who are not Christians, struggle with the resurrection. They like the thought of Jesus being a good guy. They like his moral teaching.

They like all the different things he did. They even wonder what the death was about. But the resurrection, that's just a step too far. But Peter grasps it so important when he says, death could not hold him.

[ 13 : 00 ] And it's difficult to grasp only if Jesus is a good man, a decent bloke, a nice character. But if he is God of God, if he is divine, as well as human, he is the author of life.

And if we recognize evil as our reality, and death as a reality, as an expression of evil, the ultimate expression of evil, that separation from life, then we see this as a right and a good answer to our need.

It's the only way that God chooses to give himself to death on our behalf, in our place, rests on that Sabbath, and on the first day of the week, chooses to rise again by God's power to reveal his victory over the grave and over death, and to show us the power that he gives us to defeat sin and death in our own lives.

And it's newness, and it's hope, and it means that even though we die, yet we shall live. That's our hope, our hope is based on the resurrection.

And Paul then goes on to strengthen that by saying in 1 Corinthians 15, without the resurrection, our faith is in vain, it's an empty song sung by fools.

[ 14 : 40 ] Isn't it? We're singing about, and we're praising, and we're preaching about Jesus, but he's dead. And he hasn't transformed our lives.

It's all been a sham. It's all been a mistake. It's all just been make-believe, it's all just been something that has been handed down and feels nice, but it's useless.

Faith is dead without that. Without the truth of the resurrection, and the historical reality of the resurrection at best.

If Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead at best, maybe the world is a dualistic battle between good and evil that has not yet been decided.

Bad news, isn't that? Bad news. At worst, well, death reigns.

[ 15 : 33 ] And there isn't any purpose, and there's no real meaning to life, because there is no God, and there is no love, and there is no life, and there is no hope, ultimately.

But Christ is not in the realm of the dead, Christ is in the realm of the living. And the question really is, for us, where are we spiritually?

Physically, as I look round, everyone's in the life, in the living, I think. Yep, we're all alive here, I can prod you.

But spiritually, are we in the life of the living or the dead? Is Jesus dead to us because we are spiritually dead?

Or is Jesus our Lord and Saviour? Because we recognize that He has risen, and that He is Lord, and that He is the author of life.

[ 16 : 33 ] So we have that incredible truth, He has risen, just as He told you. Please think about that, if you're not a Christian. Think about that core reality. Think about what matters because of it.

Think about your own life, think about your own death, think about your own relationship with God. Particularly, I ask, is Jesus dead to you? Or is He alive who has changed your life?

Okay, the third thing, very briefly, and Myrtle mentioned this, I knew Myrtle would mention this, go and tell the disciples and Peter.

Isn't that great? Can I get you to use your spiritual, godly imaginations for a minute? And imagine God in heaven, and He's spoken to the angels and said, well, I'm going to send my son.

I think we should announce that. Go down and announce the birth of Jesus, the angels go.

Amazement, and a slight degree of trepidation, that God the Son has become flesh, but nonetheless they go and they praise God.

[ 17 : 37 ] And then they see from heaven His life. And they wonder how it's unfolding. I don't believe the angels knew the plan of salvation as it was. And then we come to the cross, and Revelation speaks about silence in heaven for half an hour.

Symbolic language, what was going on? The angels, what was happening? It's the Son of God. He's been nailed to a tree. Could there be weeping there? But there's silence. And then the third day, as they hear, as they remember, as they know, one of them's chosen to say, go and use for the whole world, go and tell the disciples.

Oh, as well, God says, remember Peter. Tell Peter, isn't that brilliant? Isn't that absolutely fantastic that God of God says, go and tell the disciples and Peter?

Because now I want you to use your imagination and think of Peter, who loved Jesus, who's best friend, who's impetuous, strong, courageous, passionate, crazy sometimes, who was told he would deny his Savior, never, not me, I'll not do it, no chance.

[ 18 : 59 ] And then, of course, when he's in that, the place where the fire was in the courtyard and the little girl comes in, you were with Jesus as well, no I wasn't.

And he's somebody else you were with. No I wasn't, cursing and blinding and swearing. No I wasn't three times in the cult, Rose. And he remembers what Jesus has said, his best friend.

He remembers all that's happened and from a distance he sees him on the cross. And he's utterly broken. And he's in his own place. And he's in despair.

Must have been such a long day and a half for Peter. And then at some point, the women came to him and said, well, I had the message from heaven.

And they said, go and tell the disciples and Peter. In other words, God's saying, tell Peter it's okay. Tell Peter you're forgiven. Look through this at the beginning, not the end.

[ 19 : 52 ] Tell Peter I've done this for you. Tell Peter I love him and I died for him. So unexpected, but so personal. And you know, that's a picture, it's such a clear picture of the relationship of God with his people.

It's a picture of the gospel. Because what does the gospel do to us? What does Jesus do to us? He exposes our hearts in the same way he exposed Peter's. He exposes in us with all the light and purity and goodness of his character.

He exposes the pretense, the self-reliance, the pride, the unbelief, the goodness, the self-centredness and the kind of pomposity of our unbelief sometimes.

And he takes that and he exposes it in order that we will fall in our knees and know his love and know his grace. And know his forgiveness and that we will run to him as Peter did.

And became such a great believer and follower of Jesus. To know, he says, and he doesn't do that to her. He does it to heal us.

[ 20 : 58 ] To say, I know, look, I know, I understand, I've gone to the cross. I see, I appreciate, but I love you and I forgive you. And I want you to see me as the only way to heaven.

And the moment that we believe, the moment we entrust our hearts to Jesus Christ, then we see that the power of the resurrection, the Holy Spirit power of the resurrection begins to break the unmovable stones that guard our hearts.

Roll away the stones to our hearts, the stones of unbelief and of bitterness and of sin. And all that goes with it and transforms us. So when we come to Christ, that resurrection power that raised him is available to change and mold and renew us.

That's the great thing, isn't it? That's the wonderful thing. The last thing, very quickly, very, very briefly, sorry for going. The last thing that I noticed here in this passage is the unexpected response.

He's risen. He's not here. He's risen. Go and tell the disciples, man, the women would have been skimming home with delight and joy and pleasure. But what are we told?

[ 22 : 07 ] Trembling and bewildered. The women went out, fled from the tomb. They said nothing immediately to anyone because they were afraid. That's not the response that wasn't within the script.

That's not what we expect. But they met with God in the person of the message and also a heavenly being.

And they were in this moment of death and all that goes with it, confused and afraid. But to me, it's an absolutely, typically dramatic end for Mark's gospel.

Mark leaves the other gospels to fill in the rest of the story. And I believe firmly that this is exactly where the gospel is meant to end.

Because there is no end. It's just the beginning. The women went on to meet with Jesus. And Mark's saying, that's what we need to do.

[ 23 : 10 ] We need to respond in faith and go and meet with Jesus. There's implications for you and for me for meeting with the risen Savior, isn't there?

And sometimes that can leave us frightened. It can leave us a little bit bewildered and even speechless because it's so radical.

It's absolutely not just a kind of skipping the park. I want to be with Jesus. It's nice and easy. This is the living God. And he demands first place and his lordship.

And he demands that we love and serve him because he's risen because he's God and he's worth worshiping. And he says, I say to you, stop worshiping yourself and putting your own heart first and your own needs first and your own desires first.

He says, recognize who I am risen and it can leave us speechless and trembling and bewildered.

[ 24 : 11 ] Because a change of heart is a big thing. And physically, the thought of heart surgery is a big thing for people.

You know, it might be healing. It's potentially dangerous, but it's a massive physiological, psychological step to go for heart surgery.

And that's partly because you know they might make a mess of it. They might not get up from the operating table. Now that's not going to happen with Jesus when you come to him. But nonetheless, there can be trembling and bewilderment, the thought of giving your heart to him and making him Lord and allowing the power of the resurrection to transform where you are and to take you from that rut where you are of unbelief and of changelessness.

But the great thing we know is that the women's fear of the experience turned to joy and their silence turned to testimony and their trembling and bewilderment turned to turning the world upside down.

And that's what will happen in our lives that we allow the living God to take root in our heart, that we repent and turn to him.

[ 25 : 28 ] And whatever we go, whatever struggles you're facing today, whatever loneliness is, whatever poverty, whatever brokenness in life or relationships you face today, take them to the foot of the cross and allow Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior and allow him to do his healing work in your heart and know the joy of life never ending.

Amen. That's power heads. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would take your word. We thank you that Mark ends his gospel in such a radical way where we are expecting a change.

And as we step into the acts of the apostles and the New Testament, we are amazed by the changes, by the transformation that this news that he is not dead, he is risen, made to this bedraggled, trembling, bewildered people.

And we ask and pray, blessed are those who have not seen, like us and yet believe. And we thank you that it is by faith we believe, even though we have this great historical reality on which to base our faith.

But Lord, give us new hearts to believe and help us to see what we need to see by faith. And may we be touched by your forgiveness, your personal love.

[ 27 : 07 ] We could all, as we come to Jesus, put our name into the name of Peter, go and tell the disciples and Peter, but it could be our name as we recognise the personal redemption that is bought for us as he deals with our sins and our death on the cross.

And Lord, may we see that clearly today. Bless us, bless us on this day, bless Neil as he will preach and take the service this evening and may the spirit of God be with him and with us all as we worship today.

For we ask it in his precious name. Amen.