

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**He is Risen**

**Mark 15:40-16:20**

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It's taken us a little more than a year, but this morning we are wrapping up our study of the Gospel of Mark. Last week, Mark took us to the foot of the cross. This morning, He will take us to the place where Jesus was buried. If you don't know the rest of the story, I can't wait for you to find out what happens next.

**Mark 15:40–47**

***There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. 42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.***

Our text picks up at the cross of Jesus just after He died. Mark mentions three women who were present at the crucifixion.

- Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all four Gospel accounts a total of eleven times. Luke 8:2 tells us she had been possessed by demons until Jesus cast them out.
- Mary, the mother of James and Joses. She is believed to be the mother of James the lesser, one of the disciples of Jesus.
- Salome. We don't know exactly who she was, but Matthew 27 indicates that she may have been the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' most notable disciples.

Mark tells us these women knew Jesus well and had been very close to Him for years. Then, Mark gives us some details about how Jesus' body was released to a man named Joseph of Arimathea. Verse 43 says he was a respected member of the council, or the Sanhedrin, the same high court of Israel that had sentenced Jesus to death. Luke tells us that Joseph did not vote to condemn Jesus, but it's possible he was present for the trial of Jesus and was a witness all the way through His crucifixion.

Joseph went to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was dead, so he called in the centurion in charge of the execution, who confirmed that Jesus had, in fact, died. If this centurion was found to be lying, he would be punished by death.

After being convinced that Jesus was truly dead, Pilate allowed Joseph to take Christ's body to a tomb he owned in a garden near the site of the crucifixion. John 20 tells us that Joseph was joined by Nicodemus who helped Joseph prepare Christ's body for burial. After placing Him in the tomb, Joseph had a large stone rolled over the entrance.

Verse 47 tells us that 2 of the 3 women who were eyewitnesses of the crucifixion were present at the burial of Jesus. They knew exactly which tomb was His and didn't make a mistake when they returned on Sunday.

So, let me summarize what Mark is doing in verses 40-47. He's giving us at least five CREDIBLE eyewitnesses to the death and burial of Jesus.

- The three women who followed Jesus for years,
- A respected leader of the Sanhedrin, and
- The Roman centurion in charge of the crucifixion

All of them confirmed the death of Jesus at the cross.

There are at least two massive reasons that is important.

1. If Jesus didn't die on the cross, then He didn't die for our sins. The entire New Testament is a fallacy if Jesus didn't die on the cross. That means we would have no hope in Christ of being forgiven and accepted by God.
2. If Jesus didn't die on the cross, then He wasn't resurrected from the dead. This is what Muslims believe. They hold Jesus to be a prophet, but they deny that He actually died on the cross. But Mark is leaving no room for this. He is establishing beyond any shadow of doubt that Jesus truly died on the cross and was buried in that tomb.

And that carries us into the rest of our text.

### **Mark 16:1-20**

**16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And 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. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 And 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.**

In the last section of chapter 15, Mark was verifying that Jesus really did die. In this passage, he is verifying that Jesus really did rise from the dead. In this passage, there are two significant evidences (among many others we find in Scripture) for the historical reality of Christ's bodily resurrection.

### Evidence #1 - The empty tomb.

The three women enter the tomb and see a couple of things. They see an angel dressed in a white robe. And they see the place where they had laid Jesus on Friday evening. Do you know what they didn't see? The body of Jesus! He was not there because He had risen from the dead. The tomb was empty.

Now, think about this for just a moment. The entire power structures of the Jewish establishment and the Roman government were concentrated on snuffing out the Jesus movement in Israel. Matthew 27 tells us that Pilate had a full guard of soldiers stationed at the tomb to secure the body of Jesus. In the weeks and months that followed the resurrection, the same Jewish and Roman leaders who crucified Jesus continued to try and stop the Apostles and their message about Christ, a message that centered on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

But the message of Christ's resurrection would have been easy to disprove. All the authorities had to do was produce the body of Jesus. But they couldn't do that because the tomb was empty. And the tomb was empty because Jesus rose from the dead.

### Evidence #2 - Eyewitnesses

The three women come to the tomb of Jesus, and Mark recounts what they must have reported later on. They saw the massive stone used to seal the entrance of the tomb now having been rolled back. That would have been a significant undertaking. Some scholars estimate this kind of stone to weigh several thousand pounds. That rules out any theory that a few of Jesus' disciples crept into the garden and quietly stole the body from under the noses of the Roman guards.

The three women also saw the angel. They heard him speak. They followed his instructions and inspected the place where Jesus had been laid. They were eyewitnesses to the fact that a supernatural power was at work in the resurrection of Jesus. And just consider what Mark has done here. We started our text this morning with a detailed description of who these women were. They weren't anonymous. Mark told us their names. He told us details like Mary's hometown of Magdala. He told us about the other Mary's sons, James and Joses. He's naming the eyewitnesses because the people who first received this Gospel could possibly have spoken to these women to see if their witness was credible or not.

But the eyewitnesses to the resurrection weren't limited to these three women. For 40 days, Jesus lived among His followers. 1 Corinthians 15:6 tells us that Jesus appeared to over 500 people at one time. That's a massive number of eyewitnesses.

Listen, it's not too difficult to undermine the testimony of a single eyewitness, especially about little details. Was he wearing a green shirt or a blue shirt? Was he 5' 10" or 6' 2"? A single eyewitness is not very reliable with certain details. But an overwhelming number of eyewitnesses that can verify a major event becomes incredibly reliable. If I was arrested for committing a crime that occurred this morning in Colorado, it wouldn't be too difficult to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that I didn't commit that crime. I have 1000 eyewitnesses who would testify under oath that I was here with them. You would have my back, right?

And hundreds of people were so certain that they had been with the resurrected Jesus that they not only testified under oath, they testified to the point of death. Almost all the disciples of Jesus would be put to death for their testimony of Jesus' resurrection.

And some of those witnesses are the focus of the last 12 verses of Mark.

**9 Now 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. 10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. 12 After these things he 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. 14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19 So then the**

**Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.**

Before we dig into these verses, let me quickly address something that is likely in many of your minds. If you are reading from a modern translation of the Bible, you will see a note attached to the last 12 verses of Mark. It probably says something like, "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include verses 9-20. Let me give you some context here that I hope will help you understand what's going on.

Most of you know that the Bible wasn't originally written in English. The New Testament was written in Greek. Each book was written separately and circulated among the churches. We don't have those original manuscripts of the books of the Bible because they weren't written to be displayed in a museum. They were written to be used by the people of God. And there wouldn't be a printing press for another 1400 years. So, to spread the word of God among His people, handwritten copies would have to be made. And, since those copies were in use, they would deteriorate. That created a need for even more copies. So, when the Bible was compiled into a complete book, it had to be compiled from handwritten copies of copies.

And, among all the books of ancient literature, there's nothing that compares to the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. For instance, Herodotus (father of history) book titled "*Histories*" only has 8 remaining manuscripts. The oldest dates to approximately 1300 years after the original. The second-most attested work of ancient literature is Homer's "Iliad" which has 643 surviving ancient manuscripts.

Compare that to the New Testament. There are nearly 5,000 ancient Greek manuscripts of various sections of the New Testament. Some of those manuscripts are only 25-50 years removed from the originals. When you expand that number to include ancient copies in languages like Latin and Ethiopic, the number is in the range of 25,000. So, we have a wealth of manuscripts to draw from to translate the New Testament.

But one of the challenges to translating from those manuscripts is that they are all handwritten. And, like some of our Bibles, there are notes and comments that were written down next to the Scriptures. If you look at most of my Bibles, you'll find hundreds of times where I've written a comment or cross-reference next to the Bible verses. Now imagine if I had copied the Bible in my own handwriting and then added my comments alongside it in that same handwriting. Someone who looks at that may have a difficult time distinguishing my handwritten notes from the actual scriptures. That's one of the challenges that translators have in translating those ancient manuscripts. In those instances, they have to try and discern what is Scripture and what are comments or references from the individual who copied the Bible thousands of years ago. When that happens, the translators compare all the surviving manuscripts to see where there is agreement between the manuscripts.

And, in the case of the last 12 verses of Mark, while some of the ancient manuscripts include them, a few of the oldest manuscripts don't. The translators have worked with so much integrity that they clearly let us know any time a passage isn't conclusively agreed upon through comparison among the ancient manuscripts.

And this should increase our confidence in the reliability of our English Bibles. They have been translated by people who are so committed to the Bible as the Word of God that they aren't hiding anything or covering anything up and are careful to include any significant challenges they have had in conclusively verifying a text. And 99% of the New Testament represents the translation of ancient manuscripts that have been conclusively verified. The same God who has miraculously worked by

His power to inspire the Scriptures is the God who has used His power to preserve them for thousands of years.

So, how are we to take these last 12 verses? At the very least, they contain teaching that is explicitly confirmed for us in other passages of Scripture. Namely, they are accounts of various eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

- Verses 9-11 record the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. That's a reference to Matthew 28:9 and John 20:17-18.
- Verses 12-13 record the appearance of Jesus to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. That's a reference to Luke 24:13-35.
- Verse 14 records the appearance of Jesus to the remaining disciples. That's a reference to Luke 24:36-40.
- Verse 15 records Jesus giving the Great Commission. That's a reference to Matthew 28:18-20.
- Verses 17-20 record the signs that were displayed through the Apostles as they bore witness to Christ's resurrection. That's a reference to what we find recorded in the book of Acts where the apostles exercise the gift of tongues and healing. The apostle Paul is even bitten by a venomous snake and survives.

So, at the very least, these final verses are a compilation of references to other passages of Scripture that provide accounts of eyewitnesses to the resurrection power of Jesus that are verified in the other Gospel accounts of Scripture. They connect with the first part of chapter 16 by giving us account after account of individuals who witnessed the reality of the resurrection.

And that brings us to our big idea for this morning:

**Big Idea: The death and resurrection of Jesus are historical facts that eternally impact individual lives.**

The bodily resurrection of Jesus isn't just a philosophical conversation that has no bearing on our actual lives. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the most significant event in the history of this world...And it has massive implications for each and every one of us in this room. Every truth of the Bible hinges on the reality of the resurrection.

Listen to the way Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 15.

*1 Corinthians 15:14, 19*

*14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*

*19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

Every claim of Christianity hangs on the reality of Christ's resurrection. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, then every claim of Christianity loses credibility. But, if Christ did rise from the dead, every claim of Christianity is validated beyond any reasonable doubt.

And Mark closes out his Gospel account by affirming for us that Jesus has risen indeed. And just like Christ's resurrection had a direct impact on the three women who visited His tomb and the disciples who walked with Him on the road to Emmaus, His resurrection has a direct impact on our lives, as well.

We can be confident in Christ's power to resurrect us after death. Since Jesus has the power to rise from the dead, He has the power to raise us up, as well. And that's exactly what He has promised to do for everyone who has placed their faith and trust in Him.

*1 Corinthians 15:51–57*

*Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Friends, one day Jesus is coming again. And, since He has defeated death and taken sin out of the way for those who trust in Him, every Christian will be raised to a new, eternal Kingdom with a new and glorious body to enjoy it.

That means death isn't the end, not for ourselves and not for those we love who are in Christ. So, while death is truly grievous, there need not be any fear or hopelessness in the face of death for those who are in Christ. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, death is no threat to us. It is the doorway into eternal life and pleasures forevermore.

We can be confident in Christ's power to resurrect us before our death. The resurrection power of Jesus isn't something we have to wait to experience. Jesus has promised to give it to us right now.

*Romans 6:4*

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Baptism is a picture of what happens to us when we place our faith and trust in Jesus. We are united to and immersed in the life of Christ in a way that His resurrection power will flow in and through us in a way that enables us to live out a brand-new kind of life. That's the life of Christ in us.

And this is a part of the gospel that many people fail to understand and believe. We understand that Jesus died to forgive us our sins through His payment for those sins at the cross. But we fail to understand and believe that Jesus rose again from the dead so that He could raise us up to live with His power as He lives through us in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

This morning, we will be closing our services with several baptisms. And, when we baptize people here, we say an important phrase. As people go under the water, we say, "Not I." And as we raise them out of the water, we say, "but Christ who lives in me."

The reason we do that is because that is an incredible promise of the Gospel. Jesus will manifest His resurrection power in us as we trust in Him to do so. He will live His abundant, victorious life through us as we trust in Him.

So, as we close, think about your life for just a moment. Think of the places where you struggle to live in victory over sin. Think about the places where you long to have abundant life, full of joy and peace and power. Now, let the promise of Christ's gospel wash over you. Just as certainly and powerfully as Jesus rose from the dead 2,000 years ago, He is willing and able to raise you up to that new life today.

Will you take Him at His promise? Have you bowed your life before the Lord Jesus who has authority over life and death? Will you trust in Him to live in you today and raise you up in resurrection power?