**HE HAS RISEN**

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

***“‘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.’” (v. 6)***

We have approached the end of our Mark’s gospel study. Just like the other gospels Mark concludes his gospel with the resurrection of Jesus. For the past couple weeks, we have studied the birth and death of Jesus. In most history classes that is how we study famous and infamous people, chronicling their lives from their birth to their death. But Jesus story is the most wonderful story of all. You know why? Because “Jesus, the one who was crucified, has risen!” In all of history, every man and woman have been born only to face death. But not Jesus! He conquered death. With the New Year just a day away, let’s think about Jesus’ resurrection and what it means to each of us. May the Spirit bring you the joyous resurrection message for the New Year.

1. **The grim reality (vs. 1-3)**

Before we get into our passage, I would like to go back to Mark chapter 15. It is the story of Jesus’ death and burial. Jesus was arrested, in a crazy and unjust trial. He was brought before Pilate, only to be flogged, then led to Golgotha to be crucified. There he hung on the cross for all to see, bruised and bleeding. Above his head, was a sign that read, “KING OF THE JEWS”. By the end of this passage, we will indeed see that Jesus is the “King of the Jews,” and the promised Savior of the world. As Jesus hung on the cross, about noon darkness covered the whole land (Lk 23:44). And at three in the afternoon, Jesus cried in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). (Mk 15:34)* On the cross, God the Father forsook Jesus. Why did he forsake his one and only Son? So that we would not be forsaken by God. Remember, our sins carry a penalty. And that penalty is death and eternal destruction. But Jesus was forsaken by God in our place. On the cross, Jesus became sin for us (2 Co 5:21). Jesus took upon himself our sins, shame and guilt. Jesus death on the cross was the price Jesus paid for our sin. Jesus died to ransom us from the power of sin and death.

With Jesus death and burial culminating the end of chapter 15, we now get into our passage for today. Mark begins this passage by telling us that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices to anoint Jesus body. (1) Jesus died on Friday afternoon before sunset and had to be buried quickly because the Sabbath would begin immediately after the sunset. As much as they wanted to visit Jesus’ tomb and properly anoint his body, they couldn’t because Jewish law forbid any kind of work on the Sabbath. So, they waited until after the Sabbath to anoint Jesus’ body. The two-day wait must have been painful. This was their act of love and devotion. They wanted to express their love one last time by anointing Jesus body. Their love was beautiful. And their faithfulness was truly exemplary.

However, there was one problem. It was the large stone that covered the grave that had to be rolled away to get to Jesus’ body. They were going to his tomb with a heavy heart. They were sorrowful because Jesus was crucified. They watched a righteous man die a cruel death. It seemed as if darkness and evil had defeated the light and truth. This brings me to a couple rhetorical questions. How many Christians live sorrowful and weak lives because they worship and love a dead Jesus? How many Christians live defeated lives because when they go to “anoint” Jesus with their lives, thinking he is still dead? Now, what about you?

1. **A new reality: He has risen! (vs. 4-8)**

In verses 4 and 5, we see that when the women arrived at the tomb, they noticed that the very large stone had been rolled away. But as they entered the tomb, they witnessed something totally amazing and wonderful. Look at verse 5, ***“…they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.”*** Instead of the dead Jesus, they saw an angel from heaven. And he had a message for them. What was his message?

Look at verse 6, ***“‘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.”*** The message was inspiring and life changing. Jesus was not dead. He has risen! It was the most important news they could have received. This message is not only for the sorrowful women in this passage, but it is the same message we may need to hear as well.

This was very good news to the women and for the world. Jesus has risen! He really has risen! Jesus death was not by chance. It was part of God’s sovereign plan. Since Jesus’ death was part of God’s plan, so was Jesus’ resurrection. For us to have life and have it to the full, we cannot have one without the other. As much as we need Jesus’ suffering and death, we also need just as much Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection was God’s plan to save the world from sin and death, and to restore the kingdom of God in all of us. Jesus has risen! Jesus’ resurrection is the greatest news in all history. Let’s think about what “He has risen!” means to each of us.

**First, Jesus’ resurrection proves that Jesus is the Son of God.** Evil men rejected, condemned and killed the sinless and perfectly righteous man in human history. They tried to confine Jesus in the tomb. But God raised him from the dead according to His plan. By raising Jesus from the dead, God proved that Jesus is the Son of God, and God’s anointed King. Romans 1:2-4 say, *“the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly lifewas a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in powerby his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”* By raising Christ, God proclaimed to the world that Jesus is living and that He is the Sovereign, Creator God. Through his resurrection, God proved that Jesus, the very nature God, came to the world in human likeness to be with us and to save us. The power of death could not confine the Son of God in the lifeless and dark tomb. Jesus is God who is living, and who is with us now.

**Second, Jesus’ resurrection proves that my sins are forgiven.** Remember, our sins carry the weight of a death sentence. Before Jesus’ resurrection all humanity lived in the power of sin and death. Throughout history they have tried to solve their own sin in their lives. And men have desperately tried to conquer the power of death. But no one ever won the battle over sin and death. Without Jesus’ resurrection, we are all like death row inmates awaiting our time to die, for the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23). However, when Jesus died on the cross, he paid the full price of our sin with his life. He ransomed us from the penalty of death. In our place, Jesus tasted death for us. Jesus resurrection is so important because it proves that God accepted Jesus’s suffering and death on the cross as the atonement for our sins. Simply put, God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice to pay for our sins. This is God’s acknowledgment that we have been forgiven of our sins, and we have been pardoned from the condemnation of death penalty.

The outcome of the forgiveness of sins is freedom. We have freedom from the condemnation and death. Romans 8:1-2 say, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set youfree from the law of sin and death.”* In Christ, we have the freedom from the power of sin and death. We no longer have to be bound by their shackles. We are now free to say no to sin and Satan. By faith in Christ, we also can finally kiss death and hell goodbye, knowing that Jesus crushed death by his resurrection.

**Third, Jesus’ resurrection gives us a living hope of the kingdom of God.** Jesus resurrection gives us a living hope of the kingdom of God. Jesus died and rose again from the dead to set us free from the power of sin and death. Moreover, Jesus rose from the dead to open the gates of the Kingdom of God to all who believe. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned the Garden of Eden, we all lost paradise—which is the kingdom of God. Until the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God was shut in our faces. But Jesus came and preach words, *“The time has come…The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mk 1:15).* Jesus really wanted to bring the kingdom of God back to us. When Jesus drove out demons from men and women’s hearts, made the blind see, and the lame walk, it was a foreshadow of the coming of the kingdom of God. When Jesus preached the kingdom of God, he gave hope to the hopeless. He brought joy to the sorrowful. And he brought life to the dead. Finally, when Jesus rose from the dead, the gates of the kingdom of God that were once shut were now flung open. That is the greatest hope anyone can have—a living hope in the kingdom of God. We live a world of worthless aspirations and dead hopes. This world cannot offer much hope. Without Christ, even our hope in the family, is a dead hope. The same is true for hope in money or fame or pleasure or career or achievements or friends. The Apostle Peter captured the essence of what Jesus’ resurrection has brought to each of us who believes. *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you…” (1Pe 1:3-4)* Let’s simply accept and believe in the good news of the resurrection and have a living hope on the kingdom of God.

Now that we learned the meaning of the angel’s message, ***“He has risen!”*** we need to live by resurrection faith? What is resurrection faith? Resurrection faith is the faith that Jesus conquered the power of sin. Resurrection faith is the faith that Jesus conquered the power of the grave. Resurrection faith is the faith that we have living hope and the Risen Christ is with us now. Therefore, resurrection faith gives us strength to live a new life. As Jesus died for our sins, our old selves died with him. As Jesus has risen, our new selves have risen with him. Resurrection faith motivates us to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things (Col 3:2). It enables us to endure our trials, sufferings, and hardships in this world. It motivates us to deny our sinful nature daily and follow Christ in his suffering and death. Resurrection faith gives us peace, joy, and thanksgiving regardless of our circumstances. It strengthens us to stand firm and give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1Co 15:58). Praise God who grant us the good news of Jesus’ resurrection! May God bless each of us to live by resurrection faith and experience resurrection power every day!

After giving the women the great news that Jesus had risen, the angel gave them another message. Look at verse 7, ***“******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.’”*** The women were the first to receive the message of the resurrection. They were also the first to receive the Great Commission to preach the good news to Jesus’ disciples. But when they were given this message, they were utterly shocked and fled from the tomb.

1. **Go and tell the world (vs. 9-20)**

In verses 9-14, we are told that Jesus had made himself known to several witnesses. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven out seven demons (9-10), and she was told to tell the disciples. Then he appeared to two walking in the country (12-13). According to Luke’s gospel, one of these two was name Cleopas. After their eyes were opened to the fact they met the risen Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem and told them that *“The Lord has risen…”* (Lk 24:35). But the disciples did not believe it. Finally, Jesus appears to the Eleven and rebukes them for their lack of faith and stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen (14).

When we look at Jesus’ rebuke of his disciples, it is clear that Jesus scolds them for two things. One, they were rebuked for their unbelief. Unbelief is the opposite of faith. They were told by numerous witnesses that he had Risen, but they still didn’t believe. And two, they stubbornly refused. The ESV version states “hardness of heart”. In other words, they had a hardness of heart due to their obstinance and they refused to believe because of their rebellious disobedience. Again, this is the opposite of faith and obedience. To have resurrection faith, unbelief and “hardness of heart” need to be rooted out through repentance and faith. The key is to humbly listen and accept God’s word that is planted in your heart. May the Spirit guide us to expose our unbelief and repent of it and simply believe God’s word and accept it.

After rebuking his stubborn disciples, what did Jesus say to them next? Look at verse 15. ***“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”*** Notice he gave them a new direction. He gave them a world mission command. We call this the Great Commission. Once they were weak and helpless. Once they were fearful and directionless. They were the last people Jesus should have given this command to. But Jesus didn’t think so. Jesus believed that through resurrection faith, they could be the best kingdom workers in the world.

When Jesus called the disciples from the world and helped them to know God’s love and have the living hope of the kingdom of God, Jesus gave them the Great Commission. Through the Great Commission, Jesus helped them to have a clear purpose in life. Through the Great Commission, Jesus restored them to live for the glory of God. Jesus knew that his disciples were weak to carry out God’s work alone. But he commanded them to go because he would equip them to go and be with them.

When Jesus gave his disciples the command to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation it was also a reflection of God’s heart to save all people from their sins and restore them to the kingdom of God. When we think about God’s vision to save the world through the gospel of our Lord Jesus, we are amazed at God’s vision for the world. Today, God’s vision and hope has not changed. God wants to reach out to all peoples of the world with the gospel message. God wants all kinds to be saved. God’s heart vision is for the likes of China, North Korea, and to the Muslim nations. God wants every person to hear the gospel message, so they too can receive repentance, faith and the kingdom of God.

When we talk about the Great Commission, we must also not forget what Jesus instructed his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* Not only did God instruct his disciple to preach the gospel to all nations, but he instructed them to make disciples from those nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything he has commanded you. This is all part of God’s call for his followers and believers. May the Spirit guide us to accept God’s call and obey.

Why is it so necessary and serious to go and preach the gospel to all people in the world? See verse 16. ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”***Apostle John declared the same truth in John 3:18, *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”* The gospel of Jesus Christ is absolute. It applies to all people of all time in all places. It is clear that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. And, whoever does not believe will be condemned. People’s eternal destiny depends on our preaching. May the Spirit guide us to know our calling so that we can go and preach the gospel to all peoples, understanding the seriousness involved.

How did the disciples’ respond to Jesus’ Great Commission? Look at verses 19-20, ***“After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs* *that accompanied it.”*** When Jesus disciples obeyed God’s Great Commission, the Lord worked with them. Great signs of driving out demons, speaking in new tongues, and healing the sick accompanied them (17-18). God uses men and women of obedience. So, let’s be men and women of obedience and deeply accept Jesus command in our hearts.

Through this passage, we learned that Jesus rose again to give us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and freedom from the power of sin and death. Jesus rose again to give us a new life that has purpose and meaning, by giving us the living hope of the kingdom of God. And through the Great Commission, God gave us a call to serve others with the word of God so that we may be a blessing throughout the world. May the Spirit give us resurrection faith to overcome the world and serve God’s Great Commission this New Year.