

Easter Sunday (2024)

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Date: 31 March 2024

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[0 : 0 0] All right, thank you, Ellie. Good morning, everybody. How y'all doing? Good to see you. It is a glorious morning so far, and I'm happy that you're here with us, and it's a privilege for us that you would come and share Easter Sunday with us.

It's a really big day, and I recognize, too, that whether it is your first time stepping into a church and hearing about the Easter story, or maybe it's your first time in a long time coming back to church, man, the fact that you're here, we really do count it as a privilege for you to be here with us, and kind of my opportunity and the burden, the good burden that I have on myself today is if I do a good enough job, I want to hold out to you by the end.

That, man, Easter is so revolutionary. It's such an amazing thing for us to behold, and I hope to be able to do that. What we're gonna do is we're gonna look at the resurrection account from Mark's gospel.

We've been in Mark's gospel quite a bit this year already and kind of ending it out with that, and what we're gonna do is we're gonna read the first eight verses, and if you have a Bible, you probably notice that there are some verses at the end of Mark's gospel that are in double braces, and you might be thinking, hmm, never seen that anywhere else in the Bible.

What's going on here? Well, partly it's because of how Mark ends its gospel. He kind of ends it like an indie film. It's like really abrupt. It's kind of the cliffhanger where you're like, okay, what's happening next, Mark?

[1 : 2 3] This really doesn't make sense. We want more, right? And we're like, maybe do we stay a little bit after the credits to see if something else comes up? Like, is it gonna give us some idea of what's going on? But Mark never gives that.

And apparently some scribes, years and years after the gospel of Mark was written, they were looking at that thinking the same thing. Man, it's kind of anticlimactic. Maybe we can pull from the other gospels, cobble together some more information and details, and give them kind of like, oh, here's what happened after that.

Here's like, you know, Mark didn't give us a sequel, so maybe we'll just help finish it off and give it a softer landing. And what the scribes added, that's basically verses nine to 20.

And so what we're gonna do is, we're gonna let Mark be Mark, and it's gonna feel like a bit of a mic drop at the end, but that's what he wanted. And I think for a good reason. I think he wants it to be abrupt.

And he's like inviting us to really investigate, like what is next, right? And so we're gonna pick up where Jesus has died and been buried. And verse one of Mark 16 says this.

[2 : 2 6] When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. And very early in the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb, and they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

And looking back, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He was risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 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. 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.

This is God's word. Strange way to end, like something, like leave people with, they were afraid. That's like, that's how Mark wants us to see Jesus' disciples after the resurrection leave us with that.

[3 : 38] We kind of, we don't like that. We prefer like the feel good resolutions, and they all lived happily ever after, or they all, and it all worked out in the end. But Mark doesn't give us that. And I think he does so on purpose.

He wants us to ask the question, then what? Okay, Mark, then what? Or to put it another way, what are the disciples going to do now? Mark's resurrection account ends with them being afraid, but it really doesn't start any better, because we can miss something really obvious.

None of Jesus' disciples thought he would rise from the dead. This story opens up with three ladies, and they are coming early in the morning. They don't want to get caught. They don't want anyone to see what's going on, and they're going to Jesus' tomb.

Why? Because they're going to anoint Jesus' dead body. That's what they're expecting to find. They're expecting to find a big stone that is there. It's not going to be rolled away, right?

They ask the question like, how are we going to get this very large stone moved? And they're going with these spices and ointments to anoint Jesus' dead body. And they're doing that for good reason, right?

[4 : 44] They live long enough to know that dead people stay dead, and dead bodies don't move. They don't get up and disappear. And it wasn't like they saw Jesus like slip into a coma, and they're like, well, maybe we just misread this.

Maybe he's going to come out of it. No, he was crucified, and they've seen enough crucifixions to know you don't come back from that. Nobody does. And also notice that there's only three ladies in this story going to the tomb, right?

And we might be wondering, rightfully so, wait a second, Jesus had more disciples. Where are all the dudes at? Well, they also didn't think Jesus would rise from the dead. They're hiding out.

They're scared. They're scattered. Their dreams have been shattered. Their hope's been battered. I'm going to stop on my head with the rhyming. Some had already returned to their life that they had before Jesus entered the scene with them.

Like Peter is already back fishing in Galilee. The events of the cross for all of his disciples, they are still fresh, and they're still devastating. How do you come back from that?

[5 : 51] But Jesus had told them on several occasions already that he had to go, he had to die, and he would rise again. And also they've seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.

So there's kind of proof of concept here already, right? There's like, hey, they've seen somebody rise from the dead. It's not that they didn't have the right knowledge. They just didn't have the faith to believe that what Jesus said could really happen.

And you know, you would think after all they've been with Jesus, all they've seen him do over the past three years, you think Jesus would be just a little bit frustrated with them because of their lack of faith.

But he wasn't. Man, Jesus, what he does, he responds to their doubts with mercy. Jesus doesn't chase his disciples down and scold them for their lack of belief.

He doesn't even meet them at the tomb. He leaves an angel to meet them and give them a message. But even look at how the angel delivers the message. It is so kind. He says to them, do not be alarmed, which means he is very aware that when the ladies look at him and see him, they are alarmed.

[6 : 52] It says that, they are alarmed. And that word alarm means that they are overcome with terror. It's not like they got like a sudden like fright when we jump out and scare somebody. I mean, they are like freaking out here. The ladies are.

They have no idea what's going on. And then he goes on to explain, right? He gives them the reason. He's like, hey, don't worry. It's okay. Guess what? Jesus isn't here.

He's risen. Take a look for yourself. What a kind, merciful way to deliver the news. He names and notices their fear and he doesn't shame them at all for being terrified.

You know what he also doesn't do? He also doesn't point out the jars of spice and ointment in their hands and being like, really guys? Really? Didn't have enough faith to believe Jesus could rise again? I know what you came to do.

He doesn't do any of that. He says, don't be alarmed. He's risen. And Jesus, he does that with so many of his disciples in the other gospel accounts. In Luke 24, he draws near to a couple that are on the road to Emmaus and he listens to their doubts and their fears and what's going on.

[7 : 53] And in John 20, he reveals himself to Mary by saying her name. And as soon as he says her name, she's like, oh my goodness, Rabbi, that's you. You're alive. And then we have Thomas, doubting Thomas that we know.

He's like, well, I'm not gonna believe until I see him for myself and I actually can put my hands in his scars. And Jesus says, go for it, buddy. Shows up to him and says, do it. Every single one of these examples are dripping with mercy.

Jesus didn't have to do that for any of them. So here's the thing. Here's the encouragement for you and me. That means you and I, we can come to him with our doubts. He is not fussed about it at all.

And he isn't gonna shame you for them either. You can ask the hard questions. In fact, Jesus invites you to investigate the resurrection. He invites you to look around just like he let the ladies at the tomb, that angel said, come, check it out.

Come see for yourself. But then we hear this huge step forward. Jesus doesn't just want them to know that he's alive. He wants to see them.

[8 : 55] Jesus wants to see you. Look what he says in verse seven. The angel says to them in verse seven, but go, tell his disciples, tell the ones that don't know any of this and tell Peter that Jesus, he is going before you to Galilee and there you will see him.

Just as he told you. Jesus doesn't just want his disciples to believe in the resurrection. Jesus wants to be with them again. Think about that. Think about that for all of us that are Jesus followers.

Jesus, his name is Emmanuel, God with us. That's how he's introduced to us. He still loves that. He wants to be with his disciples again. He wants to be with us.

But here's the thing. If you look at this resurrection account, what I find odd is that he doesn't meet them at the tomb. I'm thinking to myself, man, Jesus, if you really, really are that desperate to be with your people, wouldn't you just meet with them there?

Or maybe even wouldn't you go and like meet up with them when they're on their way to the tomb? Like if there was the Hollywood version of the script that was written for this, it would have been more like, you know, this scene where you have this like camera shot, the three ladies walking up to the tomb and then a closeup of Jesus who's standing outside of the tomb.

[10:07] They suddenly see each other simultaneously and then ensue slow motion run with like really nice music in the background, ending with like hugs and laughter and joy and then like scene close, right?

That would be the Hollywood version of this, but that doesn't happen. And then begs us answering the question, man, Jesus, if you're so desperate to be with us, if you're so desperate to be with your disciples, why didn't you wait for them?

Or why didn't you go seek them out, right? Didn't you come to seek and save the lost? Seems a little confusing, seems very inconsistent with Jesus's MO. But Jesus has a very clear purpose here.

Jesus wanted to take his disciples back to where it all started. You know, Jesus, like he could have like went, he could have walked right into Jerusalem, went to the priests and the leaders and said like, ta-da, you guys blew it.

You know, and he didn't do that. He goes to Galilee. He doesn't choose to go and show his enemies what's up. He goes back to the place where his ministry began. He goes back to the place that were filled with good memories for his disciples back in Galilee.

[11:14] Man, if you just read, Mark's gospel opens up with Jesus's public ministry beginning there, back in Galilee. And it's full of all these amazing moments. It's where he calls his first disciples.

He begins to cast out demons and heal the sick and the blind and the lepers. It's where people start to notice, man, this guy, when he teaches, something's different on him. He says stuff. He has an authority when he teaches.

He's just different. Everyone is astonished by him. And he's gone throughout the Galilean countryside by that time preaching and teaching. It's in Galilee where Jesus moves from a nobody to a somebody that couldn't be ignored anymore.

And that's a lot of good memories for his disciples. But I would say this, that's not why Jesus is going back to Galilee. He's not trying to rinse and repeat that. What's Jesus up to?

Well, I think there's multiple layers here. First, I think he wants the disciples to know that he still wants them as his followers. Notice he's calling them to follow him.

[12:16] He doesn't meet them at the tomb. He says, he goes ahead of them and he says, follow me to this place. He calls them to follow him just like he did the first time. What a relief to them and to us.

Like taking them back, he's taking them back to the beginning. And guys, by this time, Jesus had every reason to write them off. They had betrayed him. They had deserted him. They had left him.

They stopped believing. Like, but Jesus doesn't give up. But he's taking them back. Taking them back to Galilee, the beginning. And what he's doing, he's reaffirming his call over them, that his call to follow him hasn't been revoked.

But there's something else going on here as well. He's calling them to remember. He's pulling them out of the despair and the shame and the hopelessness that they're feeling.

And what he's doing, he's putting them back in the starting blocks to run again. But this time, it's not gonna be like the last time. Now, now, they're on the other side of the resurrection.

[13 : 17] Jesus is more than just a good teacher. He's more than this powerful prophet that can heal the sick. He is the son of God. He's conquered sin and death. See, the resurrection for the disciples wasn't the end point.

It was a new beginning. It was a restart on the life that they had already lived with Jesus. But this time, it's in light of the resurrection. David Garland, he's a theologian.

He comments on this so brilliantly. He says this, we can summarize what this command to go to Galilee means in Mark's context, and for ours as well. There is no resting place in the joy and triumph of the resurrection.

We don't stop at the empty tomb and say, oh, it's all done. We don't have to worry about anything else. We have always to return to the beginning in Galilee and advance forward again to the cross.

It is a continual pilgrimage, and the Christ whom we follow is both the crucified and risen Christ. In that way, the story is rounded off, and we realize it's unity.

[14 : 20] The invitation, therefore, to begin again, where Jesus first called the disciples, taught them, and sent them out. Galilee. Galilee is the starting point for the discipleship road.

It is where a renewed journey to Jerusalem, carrying Christ's cross, has its beginning. It is the start of the disciples' lap around the track.

The baton has now been passed on to them. Jesus is not simply a step ahead of his failing disciples, but a journey ahead. Now that he has completed the journey, they will be enabled to make it themselves.

Jesus, what he's doing here, he is giving his disciples a fresh start. But this new lap, this new chapter, it's gonna be radically different. And the resurrection demands that we live differently.

And thank goodness, like, we all get fresh starts. We all want fresh starts. We're all looking for fresh starts and new beginnings. We need that. It reminds me of that Southwest Airlines commercial.

[15 : 26] I don't know if you guys seen this, where it's like, somebody like, just absolutely humiliates themselves publicly. And then the next question is like, wanna get away? Like, we get that, right?

We have those moments where we're just like, oh my gosh, I can't believe I just did that. Oh my gosh, I can't believe I just blew it big time. Oh my gosh, I wish I could go back and reset and replay the last five minutes of my life and just do it totally differently because I would.

We all have those things. We all wanna get away. We all want to escape or have a redo. That's what we want when we blow it. You might've heard that like one day, and you might even believe this, that, you know, one day God is going to save us from hell.

He's gonna, all the wrong things he's gonna make right. But you might be wondering, yeah, but what about the hell that I'm living in right now? What about all those things? And Mark gives us the answer.

He says, the resurrection doesn't transport you to a better place. You still live in all the same relational and economic realities, good and bad. The world around you hasn't suddenly changed to be nice and courteous.

[16 : 29] You still got mortgage payments and meet people. They don't suddenly disappear. You still live in a body that ages and wrinkles and doesn't metabolize like it used to. None of that changes.

We don't get to escape those things. But in another sense, the resurrection is an escape. It's an escape from the old way of seeing how the world works.

It's an escape from the old way of receiving the world. And it's an escape from the old way of engaging the world. See, believing the resurrection won't suddenly change your body.

It won't suddenly change your bank balance. What it does, it changes you. It changes who you are from the inside out. It renews your heart and your mind. That's why Jesus' disciples had to return to Galilee.

Galilee hadn't changed. They would be surrounded by the same doubters. They would still have the same difficult family members in their life. They would be dealing with the same sick people and demon-possessed people.

[17 : 29] The Pharisees would still be there, and they still hated Jesus, and they still hated Jesus' followers. They would still go back and live in the same home that didn't have air conditioning in the hot Middle Eastern desert. None of those things changed.

But they did. They changed. And though they begin that journey, as Mark says, afraid, they didn't stay that way. And we know that.

We know that. It goes on. We see that from history in the book of Acts, that this ragtag group of 100-ish nobodies, they didn't just fade into oblivion.

In less than one generation, this is what their opponents said about them. And this was said about them in the city of Thessalonica, which is 2,400 kilometers from Jerusalem.

I Google mapped this. So, yeah. That's right. I mean, this is far away from where all this takes place. This is what it said of them. Acts 16, verse 7, these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

[18 : 31] They had turned the world upside down in one generation. In history, think about this. What were the moments in history where the world got turned upside down? Well, it's typically big empires with great armies.

Or it was world wars. Or it was revolutions. Or it was scientific discoveries. Think like the atom bomb or the microchip and the internet. Those were world-changing moments, good and bad.

But the disciples, they didn't have armies. They didn't have advanced weaponry. They didn't have the latest tech. What they had is that each other. And they had a living truth, a truth that directed their lives.

Jesus died and Jesus rose again. And a bunch of nobodies from nowhere, that truth got into them and it turned their world upside down.

The resurrection turned their world upside down. And because of that, it changed their lives forever. And then what did they do? They went out and they turned the world upside down.

[19 : 37] See, as followers of Jesus, before you and I can turn the world upside down for Jesus, our world, our mind, our heart has to be turned upside down.

Now let me be clear. This doesn't mean resurrection life is just running out and everything is just gonna be amazing from this point forward. The resurrection life isn't free of trials and failures.

It isn't free of persecution. The world doesn't like to be turned upside down. But the resurrection calls us to be faithful still because it's worth it. When you start living radically like the resurrection demands, this is what's gonna happen.

The people around you, they're gonna be confused. They're gonna call you crazy. They're gonna call you foolish. They're gonna say you're wasting your life. You're throwing it away. You're being small-minded. You're being anachronistic or archaic or bigoted and any of those things.

Think about this. The first Christians, they lived in a Greco-Roman world. That world, that was the culture that dominated. And they were maligned and they were mistreated because they didn't follow the way of life that was expected of them, that was demanded of them.

[20 : 53] They lived differently. So what is the way of life that is being held out to you and me? What is the way of life that is being told, like, this is the sweet life, this is the good life, this is the vision that you should follow in?

Is it one of political activism? Man, we can change the world by defeating our political opponents, our political enemies, who just stand in the way of our utopian vision.

If they just got on board with what we know is better and they listen to us, man, this world would be such a better place. Or is it the capitalist American dream?

The big house, two cars, kids, the hypoallergenic dog, the nine-to-five job, so much stuff, you need a storage unit because you can't fit it in your garage, in your house?

Yeah. And what about, I wanna speak to you young people in the room. Young people are probably like, eh, none of that really rings true, but what about for you?

[21 : 53] What is the good life being held out to you right now? Is it just having the most fun that you can before you become a responsible adult? Is it live not to be bored or to get the most likes?

Is the perfect young adult vision for life that vision of happiness? Is it having great hobbies, chasing romances, sexual encounters, sports, popularity, personal expression, post-worthy experience?

See, whether you're an adult or a young adult or a youth, the resurrection calls you to leave behind a vision that's being held out to you to start to pursue a new and better one.

Now, maybe you're hearing this and you're just like, man, just this sounds way radical. This sounds hard. Actually, it sounds impossible. Well, you'd be right because the resurrection always follows on from the crisis of the cross.

See, think about this. You can't get to the resurrection. You can't experience it unless you travel through the cross. The two go hand in hand. It was true for Jesus. Before you step into resurrection life, a dying has to take place.

[23 : 03] Think about this. Jesus was in the garden, sweating drops of blood. He was so anxious as he was thinking about the short journey ahead of him to the cross that was about to begin.

He was wrestling with surrendering that. And every time God calls you and me to leave something, to leave behind, to let go a vision of the so-called good life, it is a hard thing to do.

It is not easy. We often wrestle and sometimes for a long time we wrestle before we surrender that. But will you follow Jesus who said to the Father in that garden, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

See, when you and I get to that place, when we finally get to that place, where we wrestle and we finally say, you know what? Yeah, I can surrender. What you've done is you've chosen to pick up the cross and die to something more important.

Often it's a part of your false self that wants to live on its own terms for its own glory, for a piece of the counterfeit good life. But at the crisis of the cross, God strips all of that away.

[24 : 14] And you know what? He does it over your lifetime. He doesn't do it all at once. It happens little by little, piece by piece. But here's the thing. Every time you do that, every time you are brought to the crisis of the cross and you lay it down and surrender, what happens on the other side of that surrender is resurrection life.

Every single time. And it doesn't happen once. It's a life of many surrenders. That's what it looks like to follow Jesus. There are many crisis of the cross moments. And in the resurrection, what we find is that we live a life of holding nothing back from Jesus.

We may lose a lot of things. It may feel like that and it may sound like that if you're not there yet, but I want to say this. It is so worth it because living this way has its own rewards.

C.S. Lewis said it this way. Keep back nothing. He's encouraging followers of Jesus, people in the room, even if you're not yet following Jesus, think about this.

Keep back nothing because nothing that you have not given away will ever really be yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead.

[25 : 24] look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, decay, but you look for Christ and you will find him.

And with him, guess what? Everything else is thrown in. Are you willing to lose what you have in hopes that Jesus has something better on the other side because that is living the resurrection and it is not easy.

Friends, I'm not gonna pretend it is not easy but it is always worth it and you don't have to believe me, believe Jesus. And the resurrection requires that. It requires you to believe that Jesus always fulfills his promises.

There's this little phrase in verse 7 of chapter 16 that we just read and it's the angel saying to them just as he told you, just as Jesus told you. Well, what had Jesus already told his disciples?

Well, he already told him that he was gonna die and rise again. And if Jesus is able to keep that promise, it stands to reason that he is able to keep all of the promises he's made. I mean, if there was one promise that he wouldn't be able to keep, like it would have been that one but he did.

[26 : 36] He died and he rose again. And think of all that he promised just in Mark's gospel alone. He tells them that he would fill them with the Holy Spirit, that he would make them fishers of men, that they would be richly rewarded for every sacrifice they made for them, that they would be bringing the gospel to all the nations, that he would be reigning in heaven waiting to see them again and would one day return for them.

Friends, I wanna say to you today, if he kept the promise of dying and rising, he's keeping those two. He is. And in light of that, how should you and I be living?

That's the question. And here's what I want us to think about. I wanna end the sermon with this question ringing in our ears. How are you going to leave here today?

As the band comes up and we respond, in a moment, we are gonna take communion together. And I wanna say, if you're here and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I wanna invite you to this. I'm not, I don't wanna invite you to the communion tables.

I wanna invite you to come to the one that these tables point to. That's where your journey begins. Man, Jesus has you here for a reason. He is holding out himself to you, a better vision, a new life, a resurrection life to follow him into, but it starts at the crisis of the cross.

[27 : 57] It starts with surrendering to him. Come and lay all that you are at his feet. All your sin, all your shame, all the guilt that you're feeling. Come and lay it at his feet and let it be buried in the tomb with him and go and walk and follow him in a much better, beautiful vision of life.

There's gonna be an opportunity for you to respond. There's gonna be a prayer up on the screen for you to pray and I wanna encourage you to do that. And if you're here and you're already a follower of Jesus, we are about to take communion and just what it does, this meal points and reminds us of what Jesus has done.

and he's died for us. And in the Bible, it says, as often as we take this meal, what we are doing is we are not just proclaiming his death, we are proclaiming his resurrection.

That's what we are doing and we are calling out and proclaiming that. We're participating in that as we do this and I wanna say this, before you come, how is Jesus calling you to respond?

And I wanna encourage us, let's make this not just another great Easter service under our belt. Let God speak to you. What part of the counterfeit vision for your life needs to die?

[29 : 15] And before you come and you take communion, I'm gonna give us an opportunity to do business with God in a moment. Man, die what you need to die to today and run to Galilee in the resurrection journey to follow the king.

And I'm gonna pray and then release you to go to the table and here's what I want you to do, to go to the table, grab the elements, take it back to your seat and then begin to do business with Jesus. You know, speak to you and when you're ready, go ahead and take communion.

But let me pray first. Jesus, this is a beautiful, sacred, holy moment for all of us in the room, those who aren't yet followers of Jesus and those who are. and I ask you to come and to bless this time with your presence.

Make yourself real to us. Convict, forgive, and bring resurrection life where it is needed. The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

[30 : 26] Disciples of Jesus, his body broken for you, his blood shed for you. You can go to the tables.