

Mark 16:1-20
April 4, 2010, Easter Sunday
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

Hallelujah, Jesus is Risen! Death no longer has Him and Jesus has defeated death by dying and rising from the dead. And not only has *Jesus* defeated death. If the Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He also will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So, it is not just Jesus who is alive. Those of us who are in Christ are also alive.

The disciples were followers of Jesus. They were among the elect. God had chosen them and called them to life. But after the cross, after the defeat of that Saturday without Jesus, the disciples were like dead men walking. They were without hope and without God in the world. But the Father did not leave Jesus to decay in the tomb. He called Him from death to life. All those who put their trust in God, believing that the Spirit raised Him from the dead, receive the new life of Christ. Though you were dead in your sins, lost in your hopeless despair without Christ, God raised Him from the dead, and He raised you with Him. Jesus is alive and because of this, we are alive.

EXEGESIS

¹And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. ²And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. ³And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? ⁴And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. ⁵And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. ⁶And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

Mary, Mary and Salome were loyal followers of Jesus. But they had not yet understood who He really was or what He was going to do. They, like the other disciples, come to anoint Jesus in death. They do not come with any hope or any faith that Jesus is alive.

He is risen; He is not here. Where was He not? He was not in the place of death. If you look for Jesus there, you will not find Him. Jesus is alive and those who are alive or desire to be alive must look for Jesus in the land of the living. The angel offers an empty tomb and an empty grave bed as proof that

Jesus is alive. Look right there ladies. That is where the dead was buried. Do you see Him there? No? For He is risen!

⁷But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

The women are commissioned by the angel to be the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus. They are told specifically to tell the disciples and Peter. Peter is shown some respect here by Mark of being picked out as a special disciple. Perhaps this is because of the great failure of Peter as he denied the Lord. The angel wants to turn Peter's sorrow into joy as he no doubt felt the sting of Jesus's death more bitterly than the others. So, picking out Peter here was not because he was greater than the others but because he was worse.

⁸And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any *man*; for they were afraid.

Although these ladies are honored with first finding the tomb empty, they do not follow through honorably. Instead of being filled with boldness to proclaim the Resurrection, they slink away in fear. They trembled and were amazed.

The angel tells them to go and tell but they do not say anything to anyone because they are afraid.

⁹Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. ¹⁰*And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.* ¹¹*And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.*

Mary Magdalene does testify of Jesus to mourning and weeping disciples. They had all thought their run for the kingdom was over. They were huddled together, consoling one another, hopeless. But Mary comes to them with words of hope and triumph, only to be disbelieved.

Mary had seven devils in her. Seven is a number of completeness. She had once been totally controlled by the devil. Now she is totally committed to the Lord Jesus. Her friends must have thought she was seeing things. But you would think that they would begin to remember the things that Jesus said about His rising from the dead. Hopelessness is very blind.

¹²After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. ¹³And they went and told *it* unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Jesus appears to two others. We are told that He does so in another form. That is, He was unrecognizable to them. He somehow concealed Himself. These are likely the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Cleopas and his friend. They find hope and belief in Jesus but it is not transferable.

¹⁴Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Jesus finally appears to them all and upbraids them for their failure to believe. Why were they unable to believe? Their hearts were hard. How were their hearts hard? You would think their hearts would be vulnerable and soft after the death of Jesus. Why were they hard? Was it bitterness at Jesus for leading them astray? Was it anger because Jesus failed in His task to establish the Kingdom of God? Was it the sinking realization that they, themselves, would be relegated to extremist status without any power or influence on the life around them in Israel?

Jesus expects us to believe those around us who have experienced him. How many of you must see God do something special in your life before you believe? Isn't your faith as weak as Thomas's? He had to see Jesus and touch His hands and sides in order to believe.

But Jesus says that you should believe those who have seen Jesus and tell you so. It is no great piety for you to demand to see Jesus yourself. It is unbelief. I have seen what Christ has done in my life. I have experienced God's redeeming love, His watchcare in the hour of need, His countless acts of Providential dealing. And so have many here in this congregation. Do you believe them? If not, then you have a heart of unbelief. You must repent and believe, not only Jesus, but those faithful saints that Jesus has sent out into the world to testify of Him.

¹⁵And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Jesus commissions the apostles to go and preach the gospel. The gospel is that Jesus is God in the flesh. He lived a perfect life. He died for sinners. He rose from the dead and has been enthroned as King of Heaven and Earth. The Kingdom of God has come. Our job is to proclaim this truth to the ends of the Earth. Let those who have ears to hear, hear and obey their King Jesus.

¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Those who believe are added to the Church of Christ through baptism. Those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved. This is not a baptismal regeneration verse. The baptism proper is not the thing that saves. Jesus saves. And the baptism is sign and seal that one belongs to the saving Christ.

When thinking about baptism, we should always keep in mind both the continuity with the Old Covenant and the discontinuity. In the Old Covenant, circumcision was the sign and seal of salvation among God's people. But now something new and greater is here. God has sent His Son, the promised Messiah, to save His people. His Kingdom is inaugurated with baptism. Something new and better is here. Salvation is no longer with circumcision among God's covenant people but now it is by grace through faith and represented, signed and sealed in the waters of Christian baptism.

He that believeth not, shall be damned. We like to hear about salvation but the Bible is very clear about damnation. Damnation is real. Damnation is the horrible truth that makes the glory of the cross and the victory of the Resurrection so magnificent. What good is salvation if we are not saved from anything? Many men act as if there is nothing to fear in life and death. Modern peddlers of religion teach that there is no hell, no accountability to the wicked deeds done in this life. If not, then why did Jesus die? If not, then why was it necessary for Him to raise from the dead, defeating sin and death and snatching His people from the jaws of Hell. Damnation is real. Hell is real. And Jesus has overcome them both. Glory to God!

¹⁷And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

All of these signs occurred in the book of acts, except the drinking of a deadly thing. Devils were cast out. Men spoke at Pentecost with new tongues. Paul was bitten by a viper and simply shook it off and survived. The sick were prayed for and healed.

¹⁹So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

This last verse seems to take in both the Ascension and Pentecost. The disciples did not preach with power until the Spirit came in power at Pentecost. But the Lord Jesus is clearly reigning from heaven, seated there at the right hand of the Father.

Now that Jesus is reigning and His Spirit is working among His people, the gospel is preached everywhere and men believe the words of witnesses of the Resurrection.

EXHORTATION

Jesus is alive. This truth is our life. Sin entered the world and brought death. Cain killed Abel and brothers have been fighting and killing one another ever since. But Jesus died for sinners and arose from the dead putting an end to all the warring of the old way. Brother should not kill brother. On the contrary, we are called to live the life of Christ, who proved his love by laying down His life for the brethren.

But we must not merely or only die. We die daily but not without hope of Resurrection. We have little regular Resurrections, like the flowers springing forth from the dead of winter. But God promises us much more. We are alive because Jesus is alive. And the life that Jesus lives, ruling with the Father in the perfection of holiness, is imparted to us. We see it partially now, as in a dark mirror. It is a bit of a reflection of God's glory but still tainted by a world that suffers the birth pangs of bringing forth the New Creation.

But we have already entered into this life. We know it in our hearts, filled with joy and hope. We see it in the lives of those that God has given us, spouse, children, parents, friends. We see the life of Jesus and we proclaim this life as true witnesses of the Resurrection. May the Lord Jesus reign and rule this Earth until not only our knees bow and our tongues confess that He is Lord but until every knee bows and every tongue confesses. King Jesus is alive. This is the gospel. Amen.