

Mark 16:1-13
November 28, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

There is unbelief in the reality of the Resurrection. But the unbelief does not change the facts. Jesus is risen from the dead whether anyone believes this to be true. And His victory over death has ramifications in the world. It is true even if no one believes but His resurrection is the basis of belief. We sometimes tend to think about proofs of the Resurrection but the Resurrection is the proof. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves that death could not hold Him, that He is the Son of God, that the body rises again, that we can be saved from our sins, that sin and death are defeated.

We should not get stuck giving an apology for the Resurrection when the Resurrection is the great apologetic of our faith. This is a truth that must be proclaimed and embraced not explained and convinced. This is the keystone to the preaching the foolishness of the cross, for the Resurrection from the dead seems just as absurd as that One man should die for many. But just as one man died for many, so the one man rose from the dead that many might be saved from the dead.

Believe the witnesses. Jesus is raised.

EXEGESIS

16 And 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. 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

The women come to anoint Jesus. Keep in mind that they are not coming to see Him alive. They are still planning on preparing Him for burial. The method was to anoint the body with spices to offset the smell of decomposition. They were not expecting to find Jesus alive. After some time, they would have come and put His bones in an ossuary.

These women are the first of His disciples to witness the Resurrection. The tomb guards in a stupor would have been the very first witnesses. But the Lord honors those women who had ministered to Him during His earthly ministry to be the first to realize that He is not dead.

Who did roll away the stone? In Matthew, we are told that an earthquake had rolled it away. Obviously, the power of the Holy Spirit had moved the Earth and raised Jesus from the dead.

These women should be commended. They really wanted to see Jesus, even if He was dead. They did not know if they were even going to be able to move the stone or if the guards stationed at the tomb would let them in. But they go to do what they can.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And 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.

The young man sitting on the right side was an angel. The other gospels tell us this but there is another tipoff and one we should probably remember at Christmastime. The ladies were afraid. Angels are not cute little cherubs with wings. They are fearsome creatures that are frightening even when they appear in the human form of a young man. We really should keep this in mind as it reveals an important characteristic about God. He delights in making awe inspiring creatures. He is not afraid to frighten His own children, even though He always speaks words of comfort to them. This reveals God's holiness.

One of the telltale checks as to whether someone has actually seen an angel is whether or not they were scared out of their wits. If not, the sighting is highly dubious.

The Angel says four things.

1. **He is risen.** They could have taken this like Martha took the Lord's comments about Lazarus. I know He will rise on the last day. But that was not the case. He was risen today.
2. **He is not here.** He could have ascended up to heaven already. But the disciples needed to see Him alive.

3. Behold the place where they laid Him. He showed them the empty tomb and the empty shelf where Jesus was laid and the line cloths lying there. This is part of the evangelistic method. See here, Jesus is not dead. Thus, you ought to believe in Him as the Lord and King. He is more powerful than the great power that everyone must submit to, the power of death.

Remember that He rose bodily. It is not just the power to be alive after death. All men have that power. If we depart from the body we will be present with the Lord. Our Spirits do live on. That is glorious and we thank God for that truth. But even if we have eternal spiritual life, that does not deal with the loss of life in Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve represented all of humanity and in them, all of humanity failed. We all sinned in them in their first transgression. We are their children and we act like their children, following in their footsteps, committing sins and in need of grace. But even though all do not sin like Adam, death, through sin, spread to all men. That death is a spiritual death but it is not merely the death of our spirit. Our bodies actually die. But God's intent is that these bodies will be raised incorruptible and imperishable. That could only happen if Jesus, the new perfect man, fixed what Adam messed up. This is why Jesus is called the second Adam, or the last Adam. He regained what Adam lost, that is, life for the human race. In Christ, we fully overcome sin and death, and we do so in the body. We realize part of this life, now. We have the downpayment of the Holy Spirit to attest to us that we have life eternal. But the promise is more than simply going to heaven when we die. The promise is that God has given a new man, Christ, to do what the first man, Adam, did not do. That is to take dominion and fill the Earth with godly offspring.

So, the bodily rising of Jesus is very important. From it, we attain the understanding of the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. It is not the same as the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul. Bodily Resurrection speaks of God's overcoming all things through Jesus Christ. The Immortality of the Soul does not do this.

7 But 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.

4. There you shall see Him- The witnesses to the Resurrection become the centerpiece of the faith. In order to be an apostle, you have to have seen Jesus alive. Even Paul has a vision of Jesus after His Resurrection. Without the Resurrection, we of all men are to be pitied, you are still in your sins. That is, sin has dominion.

1 Cor 15:12-17 12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

God's attention to Detail- Tell disciples and Peter- I suppose this does single out Peter as a failure. You could take it that way. But that does not seem to be the purpose. The Lord is not telling Peter to get his act together. He is telling Peter that He wants to see Him. He is inviting Peter to come with the disciples to Galilee. Tell the disciples and take special care to tell Peter, I want to see them.

They may have protested to the angel, "But you don't know what disloyal subjects we have been." Yes, he did know and so did Jesus. And yet, Jesus wants to see them anyway.

There you shall see Him as He said to you. He calls them up short for their lack of faith in the words of Jesus. Jesus said this would happen. He said He would be killed. He said He would rise from the dead. He said you would see Him after death. It is all coming to pass just as He said.

It takes a lot for the women to get it but they do get and are not able to convince the men.

Anecdote about women getting the ramifications of the doctrines of grace first. Women seem to understand connections better than men. They may not get all the logical steps but they do understand the whole.

Luke 24:7 7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8 And they remembered His words.

In Luke Two Angels- Michael and Gabriel?

8 And 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.

Mark tells us that the women said nothing immediately to any man because they were afraid. But Luke tells us that they went and told the eleven and the other disciples. They were not empowered to proclaim to the world the rising of Jesus. They were still afraid of enemies and what they might do to Jesus. They had not yet understood that death had no more power over Jesus. It was not until Pentecost that they are empowered to take the gospel to the ends of the Earth.

Trembled and amazed. They were filled with all sorts of emotion. They were full of joy but also fear. They were perhaps afraid to be excited. Having gone from extreme sadness to intense joy, filled with fear, no doubt their bodies were in some stage of rebellion, not knowing what to do, like a car caught in a gear too high for the slow speed. It trembles and shakes for a minute until the rpms catch up.

Luke tells us that they returned and told all of these things to the eleven but that they did not believe them that Jesus had risen. They acted like the world around them, thinking the women were telling idle tales. But these women were credible witnesses.

Upon hearing their report Peter and John run to the tomb to investigate. He will protect the body of Jesus now that He is dead. Valiant Peter. Even after Peter sees the empty tomb, he is wondering what is going to happen. John tells us that he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead when he saw the empty tomb and folded up grave clothes.

9 Now 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.

Appeared first to Mary Magdalene. She had been possessed of seven devils. This means she had been completely controlled by the devil. She had given herself to the devil and had been totally committed to him. But the Lord had saved her. He had cast out the demons and had taken dominion of Mary. Mary Magdalene is a good example for all of us. The Lord has taken us and transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. She is a representative of the worst of humanity. If she can be saved from the dominion of the devil, anyone can be saved.

Furthermore, the Lord loves her greatly. It is well said that she loved much because she was forgiven much. But it is also true that the redeeming power of forgiveness means that one who forgives much greatly loves the object of forgiveness. This is especially true when that forgiveness is deeply felt and appreciated and it has a transforming power. Mary was a transformed woman. It was Christ's forgiveness that transformed her. Her response? Thanksgiving and love. Jesus's response? Love.

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 testifies of Jesus, that He is alive and has appeared to her. They do not believe her. Why not? Perhaps they are merely caught in so much grief that they cannot see through their tears. But perhaps their own egos still have not had enough chastisement. Why would Jesus appear to her first? She is a great sinner.

But they need to understand the Lord's way of doing things. It is not that Jesus EVEN loved Mary Magdalene. It is that He SO loves her. As a representative of fallen man and fallen women, the Lord wants us to understand that His love is lavished upon such people. He does not merely tolerate their presence, as many of us would, He showers them with attention. And it is His attention and love in the details that continues to redeem them.

We should remember this principle in the lives of those that we must often forgive or whom we must forgive in a really large way. Have you been deeply hurt? Then your forgiveness has a great power. But so does your

lack of forgiveness. Forgiveness withheld is corrosive and poisonous. Forgiveness bestowed is transformational.

Do you have a difficult child that needs a great deal of forgiveness? Well, if they keep repenting, then keep forgiving. Do not grow exasperated at forgiving. Every time they repent, your desire and ability to forgive them means that you love them more. So keep forgiving.

They believed her not-The women testified. Mary testified. This is two separate accounts. The witnesses are piling up. The disciples have no excuse for not believing. God has already given His credible witnesses but He about to leave them without excuse even by their reckoning. And yet, they still will not believe.

They mourned and wept- Hope is hard to find when despair has set in. Sometimes that hope is right in the midst of the mourning and weeping and yet unable to be grasped because of the tumult of the moans and the flowing of the tears. Misery loves company and the joyful are not welcome in such a place. It is hard to see good news when bad news has been embraced.

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

Jesus appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. This is two men. Certainly, they along with the story of the women, and the story of Mary Magdalene, will now be believed by the apostles and disciples? No, not even now.

These two men would be received as credible witnesses in the court of law. The law required two or three witnesses. We now have three separate accounts of the resurrection with many women as witnesses, Mary Magdalene, who had some degree of clout and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. There is NO reason not to believe, now. And yet....

EXHORTATION

What will it take for you to believe?

Two levels-

1. **The basic level, gospel belief.** The application here is aimed at your heart. You don't really believe the Christian message that Jesus Christ came to die and save sinners. You can't see how that matters, you don't embrace the fact that you deserved to die for your own sins and yet Jesus died for you. If all of that seems foreign to you and even repugnant to you, then you are yet in your sins. You need to see your own sinfulness in light of the holiness of God and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The answer is to admit your failings and embrace His perfect work. We call that repentance.

2. **That God is at work in you to will and to work His good pleasure. If you believe this way, then you believe the first way. But if you refuse to believe this way, then you have to wonder if you believe in the gospel of Christ.** What is God doing? If you have embraced the fact that Jesus rose from dead and that He is King, indeed, then what follows from that? That you are His disciple and are called upon by Him to serve Him in whatever capacity you find yourself. Are you trusting the Lord for your life now? For your sins now? For your accomplishments now? If you answer yes to these questions, then the answer to the first question, "Do you trust Jesus for your salvation?" is answered as well.

But what if you are not sure? What if you are struggling? What if your faith is weak? Should you question your salvation? Well, it depends. How do you answer your own questions? Have you failed miserably? Yes, we all have. Does this failure of loyalty to Jesus bring you grief? Then, hear the words of the Lord, "Go, tell the disciples and Peter, to come and see me in Galilee." Those are words of assurance. Yes, you have sinned. But I died for you. Yet, believe. Embrace my forgiveness. Come to me, a bruised reed I will not break.

But if you are still making excuses for your sins, blaming God, other people, hardly grief stricken, maybe not even ashamed, then you should question. What is your condition? Is it back sliding? Is it unbelief? Or, is it simply the clinging and rebellious flesh? I don't know. I can't see your heart. If you are totally faking it, then you can know this. But if you are just struggling in sins, then you are not even qualified to determine the condition

of your own heart. But the answer is still the same. Repent of your sins. Repent of your hardness of heart. Repent of your unbelief. Repent of your coldness. And in all of this turn and embrace the risen Lord Jesus. He has overcome death, so He can overcome the sin and death in your life. Believe the witness of Scripture. Believe the women. Believe Mary Magdalene. Believe the men on the road to Emmaus and believe me.

Jesus is risen to save the likes of you and me. And if Christ be for us, who can be against us?