

He Is Risen
Mark 16:1-6
Pastor John Miller

Mark 16:1-6 says, “Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.’”

I believe that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single, greatest event in all of human history.

You say, “Well, Pastor. How can you make a statement like that? The ‘greatest event in all of human history?’” Yes. We rejoice and glory in the miracle of the Incarnation; that God would become a man in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit came upon her and she conceived and that which was born of her was God in flesh.

Jesus Christ is absolutely unique. He came from heaven and was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He was fully God and fully man, truly God and truly man. No one before Him and no one after Him has ever met those same qualifications. This is a glorious truth! Then He went to the Cross and we celebrated His Crucifixion, where He died for our sins.

But if Jesus were born of a virgin and died a substitutionary death on the Cross, but He did not rise from the dead, all of our hope is in vain. Paul the Apostle said it like this: “If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:17-19). That’s so true. Can you imagine? We wouldn’t have the joy and hope in our hearts today if it weren’t for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Then Paul goes on to say, in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” So in His empty tomb, Jesus Christ is our only hope.

What happened that first Easter morning? Verse 1, “Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.” The women in this story are to be commended. You ladies should be excited about the women’s part as they saw the resurrected Christ. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Him risen. The women were last at the Cross, but they were first at the tomb.

What were the men doing? Hiding behind locked doors crying and weeping and wimping out.

Thank God for these women, and thank God for you ladies today who love Jesus! What a blessing that is. So when I get to heaven, I'm going to shake their hands; they are to be commended.

Then verse 2, "Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week..." I believe Jesus was crucified on Friday before the sun went down, which would then begin the Sabbath. So they had to hurriedly prepare His body but couldn't finish it properly. So they returned on Sunday morning as the sun came up, because that was the end of Sabbath. It started at sundown on Friday and ended at sunup on Sunday.

And we worship on Sunday, as the early church did, because that is the day that Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, the day of new beginnings called "the Lord's Day."

Continuing, "They came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?'" This is another reason why I like these women. They didn't sit around and draw diagrams and figure out how much the stone weighed and that it couldn't be done; they just got their stuff and went to do it. The men were saying, "It can't be done!" The women were saying, "We'll just go to do it and figure out later how when we get there." I like that. So when they got there, another Gospel tells us that not only was the stone rolled away, but the stone was picked up and thrown to the side. John's Gospel says it was thrown to the side.

When the women got to the tomb there were three miracles or surprises. The first miracle is in verse 4: "But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large." The second surprise or miracle was that an angel was in the tomb, verse 5: "And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed." This was an angel.

Critics of the story of the Resurrection like to say, "One Gospel says there was one angel; another says there were two angels. How many were there?" Thousands of angels, innumerable angels. When Jesus did something, angels always surrounded Him. But in this case, there were at least two—one at the head and one at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain (John 20:12).

His body was not there, but the grave clothes were there positioned as they would have been around the body. That indicates that a thief did not steal the body. They wouldn't have been able to unwrap the body and the grave clothes would remain in the shape of a cocoon. And the wrap that was around His head was folded separate from the other clothes. Jesus had just passed through the grave clothes! So the angels were situated at the head and feet of where Jesus' body would have been. And the stone hadn't been rolled away or thrown to the side so that Jesus could get out; it was done so others could get in. So no one was there; the grave was empty.

On Good Friday, we talked about the Holy of Holies and the veil that was torn that separated it

from the Holy Place, the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat with the cherubim on it. Those were the two angels on the Ark with their wings facing each other touching.

This here in our text is the same picture. Jesus is our Redeemer. His blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, so that we could be forgiven. And the cherubim were there in the grave with their wings over that spot where Jesus had lain.

Surprise number three was the message, in verse 6, that the angel uttered. This was the first Easter sermon ever preached. I want to use it as my sermon today. There are three facts that we find in this sermon. “He said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.’” This sermon has a command, an assurance and an invitation.

The command is “Do not be alarmed” or “Stop being afraid.” I believe that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the end of all our fears. Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we do not need to be afraid.

I wonder what it is that you are fearing in life today. Maybe you're afraid you'll get an incurable disease. Maybe you're fearing getting old and the issues that come with aging. Maybe you're afraid that someone you love might pass away. Maybe you're afraid your marriage is going to end in divorce. Maybe you're afraid your kids are going to get involved in drugs. Maybe you're afraid of death—not only are you afraid of what happens in life, but you're afraid of what happens in death.

The statistics on death are quite impressive—10 out of every 10 people will die. The Bible says, “What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?” (Psalm 89:48). “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). One day you will die.

But when you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He takes away your fear of death. I like what David said in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I have everything I need.” In life and in death, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters....Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me....Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me....You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” So no fear in life and no fear in death.

After His Resurrection and Ascension when John saw Jesus in heaven, in Revelation 1:17-18, He said, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” The one with the keys is the one with the authority. So Jesus has authority over life and death, over hell and the grave.

Are you afraid? Jesus can take away your fears. He can set you free of your phobias.

Notice the assurance, secondly, in the angel's Easter message, in verse 6. There are three facts he gives the women. First, he says, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." Jesus was crucified. If we're going to celebrate His Resurrection—and we do—we need to know who He was and who He is.

The Bible teaches there is one God; Christianity is monotheistic. But the one God is manifested in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You cannot properly understand Christianity unless you understand the Trinity. God the Father drew salvation's plan, God the Son brought it down to man and God the Holy Spirit applied it to our lives by convicting us, converting us, regenerating us and indwelling us. So all the members of the Trinity were involved in our salvation.

The angel was speaking of the Second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, who is eternal and divine. He became a man in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the one who was crucified. He is the God-man; He had real, sinless humanity.

Why was Jesus crucified? He was crucified on the Cross for our sins. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul said, "Christ died for our sins." The death of Jesus Christ was a substitutionary act. He did not sin; we sin. But He paid our debt. He paid a debt He did not owe; we owed a debt we could not pay.

If you had a debt to pay and someone stepped in and paid it for you, that would be pretty cool; right? Jesus paid our debt. Then He gives us His salvation as a free gift, as we trust in Him by faith.

So it was the God-man, Jesus, who died for our sins. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Sin separates us from God. So Jesus died for our sins as a substitute for us on the Cross.

The second fact is that "He is risen!" verse 6. When all four of the Gospels record the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, you know it's important. And Christ's Resurrection was not a spiritual or metaphysical Resurrection; it was a physical, literal, bodily Resurrection. Jesus didn't spiritually, mystically come back to life; His physical body came back to life. Only Jesus has ever done this and no one since has. He died and was resurrected in a glorified, eternal, immortal body.

Everyone that Jesus raised from the dead had to die again. That's a bummer. It's nice that He raised someone from the dead, but they had to die again. But Jesus will never die again. Can you imagine an eternal, immortal, incorruptible, glorified body?! I can't begin to fathom that! No sickness, no sin, no pain!

Jesus Christ is called "the first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20) or the first in order, the first in line, the prototype of our future resurrection. Just as He came out of the grave in a glorified body, so too some day we will rise again. "The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

So Jesus' Resurrection was material; He said to Thomas, "Reach your hand here, and put it into My side" (John 20:27). "The other disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord'" (John 20:25). He ate food with them and talked with them. He had an eternal, glorified body that is the prototype of what ours will be like. Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.

Jesus predicted His Resurrection when He cleansed the temple and the religious leaders got all upset with Him. They said, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things? Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:18-21). Jesus was talking about His body and not the physical temple. He was talking about His own Resurrection.

The Bible says that God the Father raised Christ, that Jesus raised Himself and the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. In Matthew 12:38 the Pharisees said, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." They wanted to know who Jesus was. But Jesus said, in verse 39, "No sign will be given to [this generation] except the sign of the prophet Jonah." He was talking about Jonah and the whale.

We have our grandkids at our house this weekend, which is a blessing. But my grandson, John Matthew, keeps asking us to read him the story of "Jonah in the whale." He loves hearing about this guy getting swallowed by a whale and then barfed up on the beach.

Then in Matthew 12:40, Jesus said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." So Jesus predicted His own Resurrection. He definitely knew what He was talking about, because He rose from the dead.

The third fact the angel gave in his message was, "He is not here." So Jesus was crucified, the tomb was empty because "He is risen!" All of humanity's hopes rest on the empty tomb. Jesus is alive. And for a period of 40 days, Jesus appeared and reappeared in His post-Resurrection appearances to others, in Mark 16:9-14. He appeared to Mary Magdalene first, then to the two on the road to Emmaus and to "doubting Thomas." After Jesus' Resurrection, the other disciples said they had seen the Lord, but Thomas said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days Jesus came to His disciples, including Thomas, and said to him, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:25,27).

In my mind I see Jesus saying to Thomas, "Come here, Thomas. You're in trouble, buddy!" And I think that Thomas must have fallen to his knees. He then said, "My Lord and my God!" But Jesus didn't correct Thomas. Instead, He said, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you

have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:28-29). So Thomas was converted.

So Jesus could be seen, touched and could eat with them.

In Acts 9, Saul of Tarsus, the enemy of the church because he persecuted Christians, met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. We know about his radical conversion. Later Paul said that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time. Unbelievers who try to explain away the Resurrection said that these 500 just hallucinated. That would be hard to prove. How do 500 people all hallucinate at one time on the same thing? Pretty hard. And Paul said that most of these 500 were still alive, so what they saw could be verified (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Jesus still lives and changes lives today. Jesus will change your life today, if you will trust Him.

There is a third fact about the angel's message. There was the command, the assurance and now there is the invitation. Verse 6 ends with the invitation: “See...” or “Behold” in the King James “...the place where they laid Him.” In the Greek, the word “behold” means “to look with contemplation and understanding.” So it was an invitation to look at the empty tomb with understanding.

We talk about the Resurrection and give the proof and support for the Resurrection, but rarely do we talk about the results of the Resurrection in our own lives. It's like the “So what?” of Easter Sunday. “What's the big deal? So Jesus rose from the dead. What does that mean?”

I want to give you five things that the Resurrection means for us today. So what does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ mean? Number one, it means that His Person is true. Everything Jesus said about Himself is true. When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Johan 14:6), it was true. You ask, “How do you know?” Because He died, was buried and rose from the grave. Anyone who can predict their own death, burial and resurrection and then pull it off—I believe Him! That's quite a feat!

And Jesus said, “I am the way.” He didn't say, “I am a way” or one of many ways. He is “the way, the truth and the life.” And no one gets to the Father except through Jesus. If you want to get to heaven, you can't go around Jesus Christ. There's only one way to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ.

So everything He said about Himself is true, everything he said about salvation is true. And everything He said about heaven and hell is true. He told Nicodemus, a religious Jew, that it wasn't one's race or religion or rites or rituals that will get you to heaven. He said, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:3,5-6).

You can't get to heaven by being good. You don't get to heaven because you are part of a chosen race. You don't get to heaven because you are of a certain religion. You don't get to

heaven because of rites or rituals. You get to heaven by spiritual rebirth or regeneration. It's the life of God in your soul. Jesus is the object of our faith.

Number two, the Resurrection means His pardon. It means that your sins can be forgiven. In Psalm 103:12, the psalmist said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Your sins can be forgiven. But only God can forgive sin. And only God will forgive your sin through the Person of Jesus Christ. If you reject Christ, you cannot be forgiven. You must trust Christ and have His righteousness given to you as a free gift. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That's a wonderful verse. If you agree with God that you've sinned—that's what confession is—and turn from your sins, He will forgive you.

Today you can be forgiven. Your guilt, your shame and your sin can all be washed clean. You can have a brand-new heart; He'll take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). He'll wash you in His blood and give you the robe of righteousness. You'll be forgiven. What a blessing!

Number three, the Resurrection means His power to live a godly life. Paul said, in Philippians 3:10, "...that I may know Him..." that's forgiveness "...and the power of His resurrection." That's the sanctified life. I not only want to be forgiven of my sin and its power and penalty; I want to be delivered from the control of sin in my life. That doesn't mean I'll ever be sinless or be perfect, but I want the righteousness of God given to me by faith in Jesus Christ. I want the power of the Holy Spirit.

You might be looking at the Christian life and thinking, I can't do that! I grew up in church and I remember thinking that I couldn't be a Christian; it looked too nice. They smile, they're holy and they're good. They sing songs and clap and they read the Bible. I couldn't do that. It's weird. And then I became a Christian and realized I couldn't do it without God's power in my life.

The Christian life isn't hard to live; it's impossible to live without the power of the Holy Spirit. So as a Christian, you're not only given pardon from your sins; you're given power to be the husband or wife or parent—the person—you're supposed to be. God wants to produce Christ in you, so He can live through you and give you a powerful, godly life.

Number four, the Resurrection means His promise. In John 14:1-3, Jesus was talking to His troubled disciples about going back to heaven. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house..." what beautiful words "...are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ means that I can spend eternity with God in my Father's house. It means the hope of heaven. We have hope beyond the grave. Where else could you find hope beyond the grave? Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought immortality to life

through His death, burial and Resurrection. So we can have that hope of heaven, that assurance that when I die, I'll be with God for eternity.

And number five, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ means His punishment. If you reject Christ, who is your only hope, you will one day stand before Him as your Judge. At that time, you will confess Him as Lord, but it will be to your condemnation and not to your salvation. The Bible says, in Revelation 20:11-15, that Jesus will sit on "a great white throne," the books will be opened and "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life [will be] cast into the lake of fire." This is called "the second death" (Revelation 20:6). It's the Greek word "Gehenna," or "eternal judgment." Jesus said that it is the place "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48).

So if you reject God's only provision of salvation in Jesus Christ, you will experience His punishment. The same Jesus who died and rose to save you is the same Jesus who will judge you on Judgment Day as you stand before Him.

Here is my question to you: "Is your name in the Book of Life?"

You say, "I don't know. How do I get my name in the Book of Life?"

The Good News is that Jesus died for your sin on the Cross. The Good News is that Jesus rose from the dead for your salvation. But you must put your faith and trust in Christ alone.

What do you need to do? Number one, you need to realize that you are a sinner separated from God and under the judgment of God. Number two, you need to repent of your sin. What does that mean? The Greek word is "metanoia," which means "to change your mind." It literally means "to change your direction" or make a 180 and now follow Jesus Christ. Number three, you need to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. John 1:12 says, "As many as [receive] Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." This is what we mean by believing or trusting or putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

So you must realize you're a sinner separated from God. Repent of your sins and turn away from them. Receive Him by opening your heart. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). And we know John 3:16 so well: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." or "His only unique Son" "...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). God wants to give you a free gift.

Do you know if you'll go to heaven when you die? Do you know if your sins are forgiven? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you haven't done that, I want to give you an opportunity to do that right now; to invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart, to trust Him as your Savior.

Don't keep running from Him. Don't keep resisting Him. Jesus actually said, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30). He said, "Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed" (Luke 9:26). The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). The Bible also says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15).

So I want to give you an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, to have your sins forgiven, to become a child of God, to know that when you die, you'll go to heaven.