

Jesus Lives
Mark 16:1-6
Pastor John Miller

Our text today is Mark 16:1-6. "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 the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single, greatest event in all of human history. You say, "Well, Pastor, what about the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus Christ, where He was born in Bethlehem? Isn't Christmas important?" Yes, it is important that God came from heaven, took on flesh and became a man. It's also important to know that if Jesus Christ hadn't risen from the dead, His Incarnation and Crucifixion would mean nothing. So everything hinges on the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. Without the tomb being empty and without Christ rising from the dead, we would have no hope beyond the grave and certainly no hope that we would be forgiven.

Charles Henry, a great theologian, said, "Christ's Resurrection planted the only durable...hope amid the widespread despair of the world. Paul the apostle said in 1 Corinthians 15:17, 19, 'If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!' Your loved ones who have died—we have lost them. 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.'" There would be no purpose or meaning beyond just the pleasures on this earth. Then Paul says, in verse 20, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits..." or prototype "...of those who have fallen asleep" or died.

So everything we hope for, everything we get from Christ is dependent upon His Resurrection. If Jesus didn't rise, then our faith in Him is empty. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we are still in our sins and not forgiven. If Jesus didn't rise, you will never see your loved ones and friends who died in Christ again.

Aren't you glad Jesus rose from the dead? It means that you will be reunited with your loved ones who died in Jesus Christ. Jesus will bring us together in that eternal home He is preparing for us.

What happened that first Easter? We read about it in Mark 16. Verse 1 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." I'm a traditionalist; I believe Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon. And because the Sabbath started on Friday at sunset, Jesus hung on the Cross from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm. or for six hours. The last three hours, from noon until 3:00

pm, there was a darkness over the whole earth. There was an earthquake, rocks were rent, the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom, the graves of some of the saints were opened and they were seen walking around Jerusalem after His Resurrection.

So Jesus Christ had been crucified, buried and it was now the beginning of the Resurrection day in Jerusalem. Friday He hung on the Cross, Saturday He was in the grave and now Sunday He will rise and conquer sin, death and the grave. What a glorious day that is!

There are so many people today who are Saturday's children; they are caught between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. They live with no hope, with no future, because they don't know Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and they haven't trusted Him as their Lord and Savior.

On Sunday morning the ladies came to Jesus' grave to finish what they started. Beginning in verse 2, "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?'" It's estimated that stone in front of the tomb weighed at least two tons.

These were brave women. How would they get the stone rolled away? What would they do about the Roman guards and the Roman seal on the tomb? But their love was so strong for the Lord that they just went. They had to finish the preparation of His body; they would put the ointment and spices on Him and wrap His body in linen cloth. When we get to heaven we'll have to commend these women for their courage and their bravery.

Where were the men? They were hiding behind locked doors sacred to death. It takes women to get something done.

Now I want to point out three surprises that first Easter Sunday. The first was in verse 4: "When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large." The Bible says that "An angel of the Lord...came and rolled back the stone." Then the angel sat down on the stone. The Roman soldiers "became like dead men" (Matthew 28:2, 4), shook in fear, freaked out and ran for their lives.

The second surprise is in 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. There were angels all over the place, but another Gospel said that there were "two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John 20:12). Mark mentions only one angel.

The third surprise is in verse six, the angel's Easter message. The very first Easter sermon ever preached was preached by an angel in Jesus' tomb. "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 find it really hard to improve on this sermon, so I'm using it for my message today.

There are three points I want to bring out in this sermon. In this message there is a command,

there is an assurance and there is an invitation.

First the command. Verse 6, "Do not be alarmed." In the Greek, it's an imperative, which means that it's not a suggestion but a command. It's not if they felt like it. They were actually ordered by this angel not to be afraid.

I think the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ means the end of all our fears. Are you afraid? Afraid of what's going to happen to your marriage? Afraid of what's going to happen to your job? Afraid about your health? Afraid about your finances? Afraid about some relationship? So you're worried. But Jesus' Resurrection can dispel all our fears and phobias.

In Psalm 23 David wrote, "The Lord is My shepherd; I have everything I need." Isn't that beautiful? When "the Lord is My shepherd," He takes care of all my needs. "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." So if the Lord is your shepherd, you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you don't have to be afraid in life and you don't have to be afraid of death.

As I age, I'm feeling more and more my age. You start realizing that you have a shorter life in front of you than you already have behind you. You are tempted to be afraid—"How will it all end? How will it go down?" It takes a lot of courage to be an old person. These old folks are brave people to keep trusting the Lord and putting their faith in Him. The Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

I have to remind myself of that, knowing that He will lead me and guide me. He'll take care of me; He's the Good Shepherd. And even in "the valley of the shadow of death," I don't need to fear evil, because He is with me. He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

When the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos and God gave him Revelation, the last book of the Bible, in chapter 1, verse 17 of his revelation, he saw a vision of the resurrected Jesus Christ. And He spoke to John and 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." You don't need to be afraid of life or death; Jesus holds the keys, and He holds our hands.

So if you are living in fear, Jesus can take away all your fears. You can learn to trust Him with every facet and aspect of your life, when the living Savior is your Good Shepherd.

The second part of the sermon the angel gave that first Easter is an assurance. There are three facts he assures us of in verse 6. The first was that Jesus was crucified. Verse 6 says, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." Who was crucified? Jesus. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Second Person of the Godhead. The Bible says that there is one God in three

Persons. It's called the "Trinity," the triune nature of God, consisting of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There aren't three gods; only one God. So they are one in essence but in three Persons. You say, "I don't understand that." Welcome to the club; neither do I. If God was small enough for my brain to comprehend, He wouldn't be big enough to take care of my needs. God is transcendent and infinite. But we know there is a Father, a Son and a Holy Spirit, all divine beings in one God.

Let me make it clear: the Jesus who died, the Jesus who rose, the Jesus who is coming back was God in flesh when He was on the earth. There has never been anyone before, and there will never be anyone after who is God. There were a number of men who wanted to become gods, but there was only one God who became a man, and that is Jesus Christ.

So Jesus took on humanity in the womb of the Virgin Mary. I believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus left heaven, the Holy Spirit had conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary and the Son of God was conceived. So what was born was the God-man; fully God and fully man in one Person, Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 says Jesus "was crucified." He came from heaven, took on a body—"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)—so that He could die on the Cross. And why did Jesus die on the Cross? Good question. 1 Corinthians 15:3 says, "Christ died for our sins." It was my sins, His death. He actually took my place.

You have to understand the word "substitution." Jesus was a substitutionary sacrifice for my sins. He took my place on the Cross and paid the penalty for my sins when He died.

Notice the second assurance the angel gave, in verse 6. He said, "He is risen!" So Jesus was crucified, died the God-man for my sins and He was risen. This is the Resurrection.

All four Gospels record the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whenever you have all the Gospels recording an event, it means it's a very important event. Christ's Resurrection was not a spiritual or metaphysical Resurrection; it was a literal, physical, bodily Resurrection.

You ask, "John, why are you making such a specific, big deal about that? Why is it important how Christ rose from the dead?" It's important that it wasn't just a spiritual resurrection. It wasn't a kind of mystical resurrection. It was a physical, literal, bodily Resurrection. Jesus Christ, in the same body He lived in, He was crucified and buried in. Then that same body was metamorphosized; it was transformed. It was turned into a glorified, eternal body when He came out of the grave, never to die again.

The cool thing about this is that Jesus was our prototype. He was the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" or died in Christ. One day our bodies will come out of the grave, and they will be metamorphosized, they will be transformed. And "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). So the same kind of body that Jesus came out of the grave in on

that first Easter is the same kind of body we'll get when we come out of the grave. We aren't God; we won't be divine. But we will have an eternal body that won't get old—Praise Jesus!—won't get weak, won't get sick, won't get cancer, no sin, eternal in the heavens forever and ever! That's all because Christ rose from the dead. What an amazing truth!

Jesus also predicted His Resurrection. In John 2:19-21 Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jewish authorities thought He was talking about the actual building, the temple in Jerusalem. "Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'" Then John said, "He was speaking of the temple of His body." Jesus wasn't talking about the physical temple.

Remember when Jonah was swallowed by the whale? My grandkids love the story of Jonah and the whale. They love it when Jonah was barfed up onto the beach.

And Jesus believed in the story of Jonah. 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" (Matthew 12:40). He used that as an analogy of His death, burial and Resurrection.

Notice the third assurance given to us in the angel's message: Jesus was gone. He was crucified, He arose, and verse 6 says, "He is not here." The tomb was empty. Humanity's only hope of forgiveness and eternal life with God is the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. For a period of 40 days, Jesus appeared and disappeared. It's called the "post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ."

In Mark 16:9-14, Jesus appeared first to Mary, then to the two on the road to Emmaus and to doubting Thomas and the other eleven disciples. And He appeared to Paul of Tarsus, who was on his way to Damascus to have Christians arrested and thrown in prison. Paul actually encountered the resurrected Christ; he saw the Lord and was converted to Christianity. And in 1 Corinthians 15:6, Paul tells us that Jesus "was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present." They witnessed the post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ, and Paul basically said, "I can give you their phone numbers. You can call them and talk to them.; they're still alive."

Jesus lives and still changes lives. One of the strongest evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the empty tomb. No one can explain what happened to Jesus' body. He rose from the dead.

Then, thirdly, notice the invitation at the end of the angel's message. "See..." or "behold" "...the place where they laid Him." This is an invitation to look and see with understanding. "Behold" means "to look and contemplate with the mind, to think down upon." So it's important the think about the Resurrection and its implications.

Basically the angel was saying, "Look. They laid Him right here, but He's gone, He's not here. Think about it!" Think about all it implies, all it means. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

What are the implications? Let me give you five things that result from Christ's Resurrection. Number one, as to His Person, it means everything that Jesus said is true. Jesus said He was going to die, and He did. Jesus said He would be buried, and He was. Jesus said He would rise from the dead, and He did. So everything else Jesus said can be believed. And here's what He also said in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Then to make sure we understand that, He said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me."

There is only one way to get to heaven, and that's through Jesus Christ. There is no other path; you can't just be religious, you can't just be a good person, it's not a rite or a ritual, it's not your race. It's by Jesus Christ. You must come with your hands empty and reach out to receive the free gift of salvation that Jesus offers. So the invitation is to "come and see" His Person, Jesus Christ.

What He said about salvation was what He told Nicodemus, a very religious Jew who kept all the law—if anyone could get to heaven by being good, it would be Nicodemus. But Jesus told Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

"Born again" means "born from above" or when the Spirit of God regenerates you. That means He gives you new life. A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. It's not just a person who believes in God or goes to church or does religious rites or rituals; it's a person who has the life of God in their soul. That's a Christian. It's a person who is born into God's family by the work of the Spirit.

And everything Jesus said about heaven is true. Everything Jesus said about hell is true. Thus Jesus must become the object of our faith.

I want to encourage you to put your faith in, put your trust in, put your hope in Jesus Christ. He won't disappoint you. He is God, who rose from the dead and lives to save.

Number two, we have His pardon. That means our sins can be forgiven. The psalmist said in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." In 1 John 1:9, it says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I'll never forget that August day I sat on the beach north of Ventura on my favorite spot where I used to love to go hang out. I turned my heart over to the Lord. I said, "Lord, forgive me. Come into my heart. Jesus, I surrender to you." I wept tears of repentance. I felt like a weight had lifted off my shoulders. I felt all the guilt, all the shame, all the blackness in my life just lift away. I felt His presence. I felt His pleasure. I felt the joy of the Lord. And what a blessing to know that my sins were forgiven! He separated them "as far as the east is from the west."

I want you to know that every one of us has sinned. Every one of us "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). There is no one good enough to save yourself; we're all sinners. But Jesus Christ can forgive

your sins. Only God can do that. Only Jesus can do that. So you must turn to Him in faith today and invite Him to forgive your sins and to come into your heart and be your Savior. You can experience pardon for your sins—all the guilty and shame can be removed.

Number three, because of the Resurrection, we also have His power. He gives us power to live the Christian life. In Philippians 3:10 Paul said, "...that I may know Him..." that is, salvation "...and the power of His Resurrection," which is sanctification or holy living. God not only wants to forgive your sins and pardon them; He also wants to empower you to live a godly, holy, Christian life.

You're not going to be perfect. You won't be sinless until you get to heaven and have a new body. But as you walk with the Holy Spirit's power in your life and you trust in the Lord, He'll change you and free you from sinful habits and from the weakness of your flesh. He'll shape you and make you more into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. So we have pardon from sin and power available to live a godly, holy life free from the bondage of sinful habits.

Number four, we have His promises. I like this. In John 14:1-3, Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room the night before He was crucified, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house..." referring to heaven "...are many mansions..." or abiding places "...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."

I thank God for that promise. Jesus Christ is actually preparing a place for me in heaven. Jesus is going to come back for His own children. He'll catch us up "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

I believe you can have absolute assurance of your sins being forgiven and that you will go to heaven when you die. You have to have that assurance; you can't live without assurance of knowing that if you died today, you would go to heaven and be with the Lord. So it's the promise of heaven that Jesus gives us.

In Psalm 23, David opened with "The Lord is my shepherd." In the middle of the psalm, he said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." And he ended the psalm by saying, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." So he's saying, "The Lord's my shepherd, I don't have to fear life or death and when I die, and 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'"

Do you have that assurance? You have no lease on life. And the statistics on death are quite impressive; 10 out of every 10 people living 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).

Are you ready to die? Do you know if your sins have been pardoned and forgiven? Do you know that you have a hope of heaven?

Number five, is His punishment. In Revelation 20:11-15, it says that Jesus will sit on a great white throne at the end of the age when He comes back in the Second Coming. And all the wicked dead, all those who haven't trusted Christ and are unsaved will be resurrected. They will stand before Christ on the throne. The books will be opened, and anyone whose name is not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire of burning brimstone, which is the second death. Jesus warned us about this place. He said it is a place "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48).

Are you going to heaven when you die? Have you trusted Jesus Christ? Or will you be standing before the Lord, the books will be opened but your name will not be found in the Book of Life? Because Jesus rose from the dead, He will one day be the judge of the living and of the dead.

The good news is that Jesus died for our sins on the Cross and that He rose from the dead for our salvation. But you must put your faith and your trust in Christ, and in Christ alone.

You ask, "Well, what do I need to do?" First, you need to realize that you are a sinner. We're all sinners. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). And "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Second, you need to repent. It's the word "metanoia," which means "to change your mind." It means that you not only change your mind about Jesus and your sin, but that you turn 180 degrees in the other direction. If you're running away from God, you turn around and seek the Lord, you follow after the Lord. And third, you also receive. John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Then Jesus becomes your Lord and Savior. So you realize you're a sinner, you repent, you turn from your sins and you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Bible says, "By grace we are 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).

You can be forgiven of your sins. You can have eternal life and go to heaven when you die if you will open your heart and put your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ. 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..." or have fellowship with him "...and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

Is He knocking on the door of your heart right now? Is there a small voice inside saying, "You need to get right with God. You need to turn from your sin. You need to trust Him as your Savior"? Are you running from God? Or will you today run to God? Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).