



Mark 16:1-8  
Resurrection Sunday  
“The Resurrection of Jesus”

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Resurrection Sunday (Easter)

This morning's passage from Mark closes out his account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and closes our brief departure from the Gospel of John. Next Sunday we will return to our series looking at the life of Jesus, understanding more deeply who he was, as we go cover to cover through John's Gospel, his biography of Jesus. We've only made it through the first three chapters, maybe 15% of the way. So, if you missed the first few Sundays, there's still plenty to go, and we invite you to join with us on this journey. But this morning we are reading **Mark 16:1-8...**

**Have you ever seen something, or heard news of something, that almost left you dazed and speechless?** Maybe you asked somebody on a date, and they said “yes”. Or you got accepted into your dream college or degree program. Or someone from an interview team called to tell you that you got the job. I still remember from nearly 10 years ago, driving north on I-5, just south of Tacoma, when Jim Peterson called to tell me that the Pastor Nominating Committee felt that I was the person God was calling to be the next pastor here at Rose Hill. I suddenly had to pay extra attention to my driving! Of course, good news isn't the only news that can cause us to be speechless. In fact, bad news is maybe more impactful like that. I can also remember getting the news about 8 years ago that my uncle had tragically been killed when he was hit by a vehicle while riding his bike. I was almost speechless, I was in a fog...felt like I'd been punched in the gut. We've probably all had experiences like that, ourselves.

That is very much the kind of place the disciples were in with Jesus' death. **It was hard for them to realize and accept that Jesus had been crucified.** He'd been treated like a criminal. And quite frankly, when the women discovered the empty tomb, it didn't necessarily make things any easier. It's easy for the first Christians to call this Good News a few days/weeks later because of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances; it's easy for us to call it “Good News” now, but at that moment it was shocking, startling, and left them speechless for a time. They just weren't expecting any of this.

And we know they weren't expecting the empty tomb, because the women went to the tomb with spices for Jesus' body. For them, this was a customary way of paying respects to a deceased person. So, they were going to the tomb just as they had undoubtedly done before for deceased friends and family members, fully expecting to find Jesus' body there. Even now, if you go to a cemetery to pay respects to someone who's passed away, you don't expect the gravesite to be empty. It just isn't even considered in the realm of possibility.

The third verse confirms this when we read, **“They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’” (Mark 16:3)**. So, they're expecting to come to a closed tomb, with the body in it and the stone rolled in front of it. But going to the tomb with these spices is so ingrained in them, they don't process very logically how they're going to go into the tomb. They're on autopilot, still in shock, and in a fog, from his death.

But when they get there, they discover that the problem of the stone is solved for them. And: **They quickly realize that besides that, the whole reason they came – to care for the body – is completely moot.** The spices are unnecessary, kind of like planning a party to watch the Mariners in the playoffs. Instead, they're told that Jesus is risen! The tomb is empty! Instead of Jesus' dead body, they're greeted by a living angel. That alone probably scared the bejeebers out of them. You don't walk into a cave-like tomb and expect to find anyone who's alive inside of it. And so, all of this is rather alarming to them...which is exactly why the angel told them not to be alarmed. He encourages them to see for themselves that the body of the Lord is not there. This would be a very startling event.

2,000 years later I think it's very easy for us to look on this and say, “Why were they alarmed? Why did they leave in fear? Why didn't they start jumping up and down for joy right then and there?” First off, if they had jumped too exuberantly they might have seriously injured themselves on the roof of the tomb. We're not talking about vaulted ceilings here.

But mostly, they were just too shocked that Jesus' body was not there. Yes, Jesus earlier says a few times that he will be raised up...but the people who

knew Jesus and heard these teachings clearly didn't fully understand what he meant. It was just too far out of the box for them. It wasn't expected. So, this news of an empty tomb, of a resurrection, with an angel there to greet them and deliver the news, no less, is shocking. It's startling.

And that shock gets the best of them, as we read in verse 8: **“Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.” (Mark 16:8).**

Have you ever been so afraid of something or in shock by something that you simply ran from where you were to someplace else that seemed safer? I can still remember as a kid going downstairs in my parents' house to a room that they still use as a storage room, but it was built as a bomb shelter. I think their house was built in 1958, and they built bomb shelters in some houses then. And every time I'd have to go there to get something: once I got what I needed, I'd turn off the light and run out of there, through a couple other rooms and keep running until I got like half way up the stairs. Maybe you've had an experience like that as well. I'm still amazed that Gwen didn't react that way on our wedding day!

Well, Mark tells us that the women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered and afraid. They needed to get somewhere that would comfort them. When you've encountered the living, eternal God in a profound way like these women have as they sat there in the empty tomb and the angel spoke to them, **When you have that kind of profound experience of God, it can leave you trembling and bewildered, and even afraid.**

So, the women flee. Now, the passage says that they didn't say anything to anyone. The Greek is emphatic. Literally translated, it says that they told “no one nothing.” It makes bad English translated like that, but it emphasizes the point. Most likely this was just as they returned to town. They didn't say anything to people they passed on the road, or at the city gate, or setting up their stalls in the market. Why?

Probably partly because they waited until they got to the disciples. But also because they were afraid. The root of the Greek word used in verse 8 is the word “phobia.” Today, we have identified lots of phobias. Arachnophobia:

fear of spiders; Peladophobia: fear of baldness and bald people (fortunately, none of you have that fear or I'd have a hard time being your pastor.)

Porphyrophobia: fear of the color purple – that's for you WSU fans.

Phobophobia: fear of being afraid.<sup>1</sup> So, they had a phobia right here. What kind of phobia? Who knows exactly what, but I suspect it was for a couple reasons: First, this experience was so unexpected, so shocking, so alarming, so amazing, that it spooked them. Who wouldn't come away with some sense of fear from this experience? I think we all would. **Second, there's this big question, which could be asked in a few different ways, now looming in their heads: What now? Where do we go from here? What does this mean? What does the future hold? And those questions are scary.** They can be fear-inducing.

Now their silence and their fear didn't stay with them forever, because ultimately the disciples do go and meet Jesus in Galilee as the angel says he would. In fact, all the gospels tell us that the women told the Disciples what had happened. And we're gathered here today because they did so. So: Their fear doesn't win the day.

And I wonder: **What if we didn't let our fear win the day, either? What if the empty tomb of Jesus filled us with hope and faith, rather than sending us away afraid?** I think a lot of people today – even people who Christians – are afraid to really look into the resurrection of Jesus. Some people will examine his life some; many people are mildly familiar with some of his teachings, or have this vague notion that he was a good person and a wise teacher. But it's like some folks are afraid to really investigate the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus...and *especially* his death and resurrection. These women went right into the tomb, even though the stone was already rolled away, to see what was going on. I mean, I think if I'd been with them I might very well have not gone any further. Who wants to walk into a tomb like that, that was closed up just 36 hours earlier or so? But in they go, almost as if they were compelled to investigate what was going on. And though they left trembling and in fear, they went and told the others what they'd discovered, and they processed together what it all means.

And now it's our turn. **Is Jesus' resurrection going to leave us trembling and afraid and are we just going to set it aside? Or are we going to let it**

**draw us forward in faith?** Is our fear of what we might discover in Jesus going to stop us? Is it going to keep us silent?

When I was first thinking that God was maybe calling me to ministry as a pastor or some kind of church staff role, it was a scary thing for me to consider. I was pretty uncertain about the idea. Now, I was a Christian, I believed in Jesus, but taking that step of faith to live it out as a church leader was scary. So, I get it, that investigating Jesus and stepping out in faith to see what he's about can be intimidating. Faith in Jesus can set the course of your life in a new direction and sometimes we're pretty comfortable right where we are. When I was a ski bum in Sun Valley, my life was pretty comfortable – I skied over 100 days each of two seasons – in fact, it was awesome!

But what if God's got something better for you in mind? What if God has something in store for you right here and now that could make your life better than it already is – filled with more hope, love, joy, and peace? What if God has something in store for you for eternity that could be better than you think it could be? What if the resurrection of Jesus, as scary as it might be to challenge your assumptions and beliefs in this life, is actually the very thing that you need right now? Wouldn't that be worth looking into?

So, let's not leave here today bewildered and afraid as these women were. **Or: If the idea that death can be overcome and Jesus' resurrection is real leaves you bewildered and afraid at the moment, at least don't let that win the day, just like it ultimately didn't for the women.** We can be drawn closer to God through this when we are willing to ask the question, "Now what?" "What does Jesus' resurrection mean?" So, let Jesus' resurrection and the empty tomb lead you forward into something new. Let it fill you with hope for a relationship with God; Discover what it means to live by faith in Jesus; Find out about the hope, love, joy, and peace that Jesus brings.

This is the good news of Jesus' resurrection: that wherever there is darkness, decay, death, destruction, dead ends, fear, hopelessness and helplessness...and as comfortable as some of our lives may be, we all face these things...maybe they are really evident sometimes, but oftentimes times they're running in the background of life, constantly there. The good news of

Jesus' resurrection is that God has made a way to overcome them: bringing light, health, life, hope, new beginnings, a way forward, and a sure and certain future. He makes this all happen, through his resurrection power...through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Praise be to God! Let's pray...Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Fraser Kent, Nothing to Fear, , Doubleday & Company, 1977.