

Sermon: Why Didn't They Tell Someone?

Text: **Mark 16:1-8 (ESV)**

Gary L. Wackler

April 12, 2020

Mark 16:1-8 (ESV) ¹ When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Introduction: Even today, there are people who say the resurrection was a hoax, a myth. This is said on the basis of what *they* call “mistakes” in the Bible. Most of these so-called problems exist only because people who are not trained in Biblical studies make poor, misguided and uninformed assumptions.

Quite frankly, though, reading through all the Gospel accounts of the resurrection, I can understand how someone, who was already skeptical, might doubt the truth of the Scriptures.

Q. How many women went to the tomb early that Sunday morning?

A. Matthew says two; Mark, three; Luke sounds like more than three (**24:10**); and John says it was just Mary of Magdala.

Q. How many angels were at the tomb of Jesus?

A. Matthew's single angel sat on the stone that had been rolled away, Mark indicates one angel *inside* the tomb, Luke has two angels, and John has two angels seen by Mary of Magdala and she also sees Jesus - mistaking him to be the gardener.

You may have noticed also in your Bibles the note that says something like: [*The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.*]

If Mark's gospel ends at **verse 8**, you have to admit there ought to have been a better way to end a gospel: "and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." **Verse 8** literally ends with a conjunction (**καί**, for) in the Greek.

Since the 2nd century the Church has struggled with this ending. Some scribes, perhaps because of this, added **verses 9-20** to try and make it feel more like a gospel, more sunshine than darkness, and more joy than trauma.

Bruce Metzger, a very famous N.T. scholar has given three possibilities for what may have happened here in Mark. (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 126)

- (1). The evangelist intended to close his Gospel at this place. After all, Mark wanted to emphasize the cross and the difficulty of discipleship.
- (2.) The Gospel was never finished.
- (3). The Gospel accidentally lost its last leaf before it was multiplied by transcription.

But ending at **verse 8**, "Such an ending to the story stands in contradiction to the natural human response to the news that God gives life to the dead - a leap for joy, not a running away in fear." - Craddock, *The Gospels*, p. 55

Assuming for a moment that the Gospel of Mark does end at **16:8**, let's look at the preceding verses. We can see:

I. The Women Were Surprised (vv. 1-5).

A. They were surprised at Jesus' sudden death.

After Jesus' observance of an evening Passover meal with his disciples, he was betrayed, handed over to the Jewish religious leaders, and then to Pilate. He was mocked, beaten, and was being crucified by 9 AM. He would die by 3 PM that same day, too late for the women to go buy burial supplies for preparing the body. The women only had time before Passover, to watch Jesus die and observe where Joseph of Arimathea would place Jesus' body in a tomb and roll the stone over the entrance. Virtually everyone else had abandoned Jesus and had run away to hide.

B. They were surprised at the tomb.

When they arrived at the tomb it was not secure as they had witnessed it before Passover. It had been opened. This was good in a way because they had realized on the way they were going to need help in opening the tomb to attend to Jesus' body.

But, the fact it was opened certainly led to other questions. Who? How? Why? and eventually Where? Where is his body; where is Jesus? They certainly were not prepared to hear "good" news.

C. They were surprised by an angel inside.

Angels are creatures who sometimes are mistaken for God himself in Scripture. They cause men and women to fear for their lives; it is such an overpowering experience. Inevitably the angel(s) would say something like "fear not" or "stop being afraid."

The NIV and ESV read "alarmed" and this "translates the Greek word (εκθαμβεομαι) which literally means "amazed." Swete says "The women were startled and awe-stricken." - cited by Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 134

To help allay the women's tremendous fright:

II. The Women Were Given the Gospel (vv. 6-7).

Certainly...

A. The Gospel is information.

The women already had a part of the information. They had seen Jesus die and be buried. Now the angel was saying Jesus had risen from the dead. This is information that bears repeating, even today. The Apostle Paul saw the need when he wrote to the church at Corinth.

I Corinthians 15:1-4 (ESV) ¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

There is also a tremendous need to see that:

B. The Gospel is shared.

The Gospel, this information about our risen Savior, is forever linked with the commands of “go” and “tell.” We are obligated and duty-bound to share this information because there is eternal life at stake.

C. The Gospel is grace.

No sweeter words would be heard than the ones heard by Peter who had denied Jesus. Peter with a lot of bravado had falsely promised he would die if necessary to prove himself faithful to Jesus. The angel said: ⁷ “But go, tell his disciples *and* Peter.” Peter’s name is mentioned last, but still included.

Even Peter who had denied our Lord would be included in the invitation to come meet his Savior in Galilee. Why Galilee? I think it is because Jesus’ ministry started there, was most fruitful there, he grew up there.

When I felt God’s call into the ministry, I knew I had to go back to LCC (now LCU) where I had started. I could have finished anywhere, but for me Lincoln, Illinois was it!

III. The Women Needed More Time (v. 8).

⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

They needed more time:

A. To compose themselves.

There was that initial wave of fear that caused the women to tremble and quiver that early morning. There was also everything that was being replayed in their minds. The word translated “astonishment” in the ESV is the Greek word **ἐκστασις**. The women had seen amazing, remarkable things indeed. They needed time to collect themselves.

The women needed to muster up the courage to talk about this life-changing experience. They would tell others in time, but their initial reaction was to run away and not tell anyone.

They would eventually tell Jesus' disciples, but they must have thought what would happen if the authorities like Caiphas or Pilate were to find out? What about their friends who already thought they were crazy and misguided for having invested their hard-earned money and lives in such a person as Jesus of Nazareth?

Everyone who would follow Christ needs:

B. To compose a story (witness, testimony).

On Easter, April 7, 1985, I felt God's call to the preaching ministry on my life. We were walking home from church. It was a few blocks before I could tell my wife what I had experienced... How do you describe the inexplicable? You end up saying sometimes: "You would have needed to have been there." How do you speak of sacred events? Speaking in front of others for some people is the worst possible fear, but speaking of God or for God...

A few years ago now, my grandson visited us. Just like the twins he calls me, Wackpa, and Teresa, Oma. We were in the church and he told me he had trouble reading out loud because he said: "I don't want people to make fun of me." Apparently, even at five years old, that's a problem.

I don't particularly like to feel awkward or unprepared either. I remember on a trip to the Yucatan I was travelling by car with a missionary after having arrived in Cancun. On our way to Merida, he turned to me and said: What are you preaching on tomorrow at the church? He had not told me he needed me to preach. I was not prepared to preach the way I like to be prepared. Give me some time and I can put a sermon together, but I am not good at winging it. I don't like to wing anything. Now if they had just wanted a testimony I could do that, so I understand the women's dilemma. How do you frame your words to describe such an important event as the completely-unexpected resurrection of Jesus? How do you preach unprepared? How does Mark's Easter story end? It gets finished by all those who have followed Jesus. We can write our own ending with *our* lives.

Maybe at no other time in the year, the Church has a lot of nonbelievers visit at Easter, even if on Facebook, this year. And you know what scares me about Easter? That maybe those who have come to our service won't believe.

That maybe those who have come to our service won't understand.

But more than that, the thing that frightens me deeply is:

That those who have claimed Jesus as their Savior won't tell anyone, anything!

Conclusion: You have heard the old expression: It is not enough to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. And that is so true isn't it? What the church does *not* need are more hypocrites or lukewarm disciples!

But you know, we do have to talk the talk, because faith comes by HEARING (the Gospel). There are too many people still out there who are NOT saved, who do not believe in a risen Savior. And we must tell them!

We dare not be critical of women who ran away and did not say anything to anybody especially when we will not share the Gospel with our neighbors, coworkers or family members. Jesus died, was buried, and He's risen.

The question is not: "Did the Twelve ever hear and believe this promise of Jesus Christ?" but rather, 'do *we* hear and believe?' enough to say and tell.

Craddock, *The Gospels*, p. 63

Luke tells us that after the resurrection, just before Peter in [Acts 2](#) got up to preach in Jerusalem, there were only about 120 believers. At the end of the first century it has been estimated there were about 40,000 Christians - but compared to the Roman Empire of 70,000,000 souls, that is quite a small minority. Mathematically it would be like a town of 1500, where there would be only one Christian.

As the Church becomes more and more a minority in *our* world and time, do you think it is going to be easier to witness, pray, and share the gospel? I don't believe so! But today with death in all the news, shouldn't Christians speak a word of life and hope? Shouldn't we offer a solution to despair and hopelessness?

This message of resurrection is uniquely a Christian word. It is the Church's story. It is for the Church to tell no matter what the cost.

Will you join me in telling others the good news about Jesus?

Jesus is alive!
He lives. He is risen indeed.