

Mark 16:1-8 The Resurrection

Easter is the day of the resurrection. The Apostle Paul declared to the church in Corinth that if the resurrection had not taken place, we would be among the most miserable people alive, since we would know there was no hope beyond the grave. The resurrection we celebrate at Easter is at the heart of our faith. If it did not happen, we have nothing to believe in, nothing to look forward to and nothing to share with a dying world. But it did happen.

Our problem is that we find it difficult to imagine just how special it is to know that Jesus is alive. To help us better appreciate the emotions of that Easter Sunday, pretend that you are the disciple John and imagine how much the announcement that Jesus was alive meant to him. It's the first day of the week. You have not yet gotten word that Jesus may be alive. You know Jesus died three days earlier on a Cross because you were there with His mother Mary. You were there when Jesus cried, **"Father into your hands I commend my spirit."** You heard the soldiers declared Him dead and had seen the women take His body to give Him an initial burial.

So, on Sunday morning you were miserable. Three years ago, you left an extremely profitable fishing business to follow the one you believed was the promised Messiah, the one who would set up the kingdom that would reign forever in David's place.

You are the son of Zebedee and Salome and a brother to James a fellow disciple and the first recorded martyr of the church. Mark 1:19 and 20 record that you were raised in a fishing family, in fact an apparently well to do fishing family. Mark recorded that when Jesus called you and James you were tending the nets and you left your father and hired men. Your family seems to have had some influence in Israel. When Jesus was arrested and taken to the Sanhedrin for trial, we read that you were sufficiently well known by the High Priest that you were permitted, along with Peter, to go into the temple courtyard.

You first met Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist who had declared that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Any doubts you had about Him quickly vanished as you watched Him heal the sick, cast out demons, command the wind to cease and the waters to be calm. You had seen Him raise the dead and once He was on a mountain and you saw Him in a glorious way talking to Moses and Elijah.

Following the Passover celebration, you had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane and had, unfortunately, slept while Jesus prayed. Jesus seemed a little upset with that, but He seemed to understand how tired you were. Then a group of soldiers arrived to arrest Him. There was no doubt in your mind, this was the beginning of the rebellion against Rome that would lead to the kingdom everyone dreamed of. Jesus' time had come. He would call upon the angels to fight for Him and a victory was guaranteed. But then things got a little confusing. Jesus announced there was not going to be a fight and went willingly with them. Obviously, in your mind, Jesus was going to do something dramatic during His questioning. You, along with Peter, followed Jesus into the courtyard where the trial was taking place. You anxiously waited to see what dramatic response Jesus was going to perform to begin the revolt. But Jesus did nothing.

Friday was certainly a confusing day for you. Unlike the other disciples, you went to the crucifixion. You were certain the Messiah could not die. In all probability God would send down fire and destroy the soldiers and then send an angel to take Jesus off the Cross.

But God didn't act. Instead He asked you to care for His mother. You agreed, probably wondering why he would ask you to do that if Jesus was going to pull off a miracle, that He was certainly capable of doing, and come down from the Cross. But Jesus died. We can only imagine what you felt then. Jesus was dead and your hope that He would usher in a new kingdom was gone. You must have wondered if you had left the fishing business for a dream that would never come true. Of course, you didn't know at that point that Jesus death was for you and that Jesus had taken your sins, and all of our sins, to the Cross and paid our penalty for them Himself. All you knew was that Jesus died. It was all over. All your dreams of the Messiah were gone.

Mark described how that day ended. Read Mark 15:42-47

Try to imagine how you would have felt that Saturday if you had been John. That day had to have been the most miserable and discouraging day of your life. It had to have been a day without hope. Your dreams had ended. Your expectations of the Kingdom of God becoming a reality were over. You had no understanding of a resurrection apart from one at the end of history. You, along every other disciple, wondered why you shouldn't go back to what you had been doing 3 years earlier. It was truly a dark Saturday.

Ray Stedman, in his commentary on Mark, wrote that many today live constantly in the despair and hopelessness symbolized by the dark Saturday. He noted that someone has called our present generation "Saturday children." That is certainly an accurate picture of our society. All around us are those living in a world that offers no hope, no meaning, no future. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to understand how John felt on that Saturday." p. 209-210

Sunday started early when several of the women who loved and served Jesus gathered to go to His tomb. Read Mark 16:1. On Friday, when Jesus died, they quickly wrapped His body in the burial cloth and put him in a tomb. There was no embalming in that day, so, they were returning to add spices to the body, spices designed to mask the odor of the decaying body. Anointing the body was what you did when to give a loved one a proper and respectful burial.

Mark 16:3 tells us that they approached the tomb, wondering who would help them roll the stone away. The stones used in those days could weigh as much as half a ton and that was too much for them.

Read Mark 16:4. We cannot even imagine what went through their minds. A stone should have been blocking the entrance to the tomb. So, they went into the tomb. Read Mark 16:5. Luke tells us there were actually 2 individuals there and the description given by all of the Gospel writers is that of an angelic being. Mark mentioned only 1 because only 1 spoke. One is all I would have

needed to convince me it was true. Luke mentioned 2 because in Judaism 2 witnesses were required to verify a truth. There was no doubt it was the right tomb and the body was not there, only the grave clothes. Jesus was alive.

Read Mark 16:6. The historical evidence to support that truth is overwhelming. We serve a risen Savior. The grave could not hold Him. Death was defeated. We are not without hope.

Read Mark 16:7 on what the angel told the women. Luke filled in with some additional details. He wrote that the women went and told the disciples. Read Luke 24:11 which records the reaction of the disciples. If you think about it, that is certainly understandable. No one had ever been resurrected before. Several had been revived to life but that is radically different from a resurrection. Read John 10:3-4 We know that you were that “other” disciple. You went on to write in verse 8, **“Finally the other disciple, (that is you) who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. You saw and believed.”**

That was a game changer for you and should be for everyone who discovers the glorious truth that Jesus really is alive. It would not be until you personally saw Jesus alive in the upper room that you knew God had intervened. Jesus was alive. The promised Kingdom was possible. When the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost you fully comprehend the truth that the Kingdom of God is, at least until He returns, a spiritual kingdom but none the less a real kingdom.

Don't turn off your imagination of being John too soon. In the days ahead, think about how different John felt the moment he knew Jesus was alive. Because Jesus is alive the hopelessness and aimlessness of dark Saturday is gone. Since Jesus won, we too can win. The resurrection is at the heart of our faith because it assures us that all we have ever dreamt of or hoped for can be a reality. Because He lives, all who have placed their trust in Him can have a life more abundant here and will continue forever in God's presence. What a glorious truth to remember, not only on Easter but every day of the year.