

**Series:** Mark — Summer 2020 Series

**Title:** “He’s Alive! What Now?”

**Text:** Mark 16:1-8

**Date:** August 2, 2020

### **Verse 1**

In Mark 16:1-8 we find Mark’s account of Jesus’ resurrection. Verse 1 begins the narrative, saying, “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him” (Mark 16:1). The three women in our text have previously been seen at the crucifixion scene (Mark 15:40). They were three of Jesus’ closest followers. Based on Luke 8:2-3, it seems they were diligent in meeting His practical needs throughout His ministry. They assisted Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of Jesus’ body (Mark 15:47). Now they go to visit the tomb in which they had buried our Lord. Mark tells us that the women travelled to Jesus’ tomb “when the Sabbath was over.” According to Jewish custom, the Sabbath ended at sundown on Saturday.<sup>1</sup>

After the sun had set on Saturday, markets around Jerusalem reopened. The grieving women “bought spices” so that they could “anoint” Jesus’ corpse. The language probably refers to perfumed oils, not aromatic herbs.<sup>2</sup> Most likely, the women purchased a compound that contained a base of olive oil and a mix of various spices. Historians believe the Jewish process of anointing was primarily a sign of respect for the deceased.<sup>3</sup> The spices and oil would only help a little with the stench and decay of the corpse.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that women were the first eyewitness to the Resurrection is significant. In first-century Israel, women held a sort of second-rate status in society. They weren’t regarded as trustworthy witnesses in a court of law.<sup>5</sup> Mark’s honest admission concerning their role in the Resurrection is a powerful apologetical evidence for the veracity of the New Testament. If the apostles concocted the gospel message, as some would assume, it is unlikely they would have made women the firsthand witnesses to the most important event in that message. One has said, “Of the basic historicity of the account there are no questions. And the story about the women is strong evidence, although not absolute proof, of the historicity of the Resurrection itself.”<sup>6</sup> The Resurrection really did occur and women were the first ones to hear about it!

---

<sup>1</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Schnabel, 434.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, 268.

<sup>5</sup> Ferguson, 270.

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, 271.

## Verse 2

Mark continues his account of the Resurrection, saying, "Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise" (Mark 16:2). In verse 1, we learned that the women bought spices after sundown on Saturday. In our current verse, we see them setting out for Jesus' tomb. Their trip took place "very early in the morning." Matthew says it occurred at dawn (Matthew 28:1), Luke says it took place "very early in the morning" (Luke 24:1), and John says it happened "while it was still dark" (John 20:1).

Since Bethany, the place in which Jesus' group of disciples were staying during the Passover week (Mark 11:1 and 11), was about 2 miles away, it seems plausible that the women left Bethany at dark and arrived at the tomb as the sun was rising.<sup>7</sup> The women could have set out for the tomb as early as 4 or 5 a.m.<sup>8</sup> If this is the case, the Resurrection occurred at daybreak. In chapter 1 of Mark's gospel, we saw Jesus getting up "Very early in the morning" to pray (Mark 1:35). Now we see Him defeating death "very early in the morning."

Some use our verse, and others like it, to argue that Jesus could not have been crucified on Friday. They get hung up on the idea that Jesus predicted He would "rise after three days" (Mark 8:31). Such a proposed controversy is needless, when one considers the Jewish way of reckoning things. A.T. Robertson explains:

Some people are greatly disturbed over the fact that Jesus did not remain in the grave full seventy-two hours. But he repeatedly said that he would rise on the third day and that is precisely what happened. He was buried on Friday afternoon. He was risen on Sunday morning. If he had really remained in the tomb full three days and then had risen after that, it would have been on the fourth day, not on the third day. The occasional phrase "after three days" is merely a vernacular idiom common in all languages and not meant to be exact and precise like "on the third day." We can readily understand "after three days" in the sense of "on the third day." It is impossible to understand "on the third day" to be "on the fourth day."<sup>9</sup>

Controversy concerning this issue ends when one considers that Jewish customs considered any part of a day as a full day. Jesus was buried on Friday, 14 Nisan; thus, He was in the tomb for a part of that day. He was also in the tomb for a full day on Saturday, 15 Nisan, and He was in the tomb for a part of the day on Sunday, 16 Nisan. As a result, by the Jewish reckoning of time, one could say Jesus was in the tomb for three days. One has commented, "Even though the time between Jesus' burial and Jesus'

---

<sup>7</sup> Robertson, 399.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 434.

<sup>9</sup> Robertson, 400.

resurrection was at the most not much more than thirty-six hours, Jesus was in the grave during (parts of) three days.”<sup>10</sup>

From a twenty-first century perspective, the women’s trip to the tomb was irrational by some regards. It was Sunday morning, and Jesus had been dead since late Friday afternoon (Mark 15:33). Given the climate conditions of the ancient Near East, Jesus’ body had already experienced significant decay.<sup>11</sup> Remember the events surrounding the resurrection of Lazarus. When Jesus went to raise the man from the dead, Martha warned, “Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days” (John 11:39). As the women travelled to the tomb, it is quite possible Jesus’ body already stank. Their aromatic oils were of little good. Even if it was still well preserved, the perfumes would only last for twenty-four hours at best.

Could it be that the women’s trip was useless, that it was just an exercise in frivolity on the part of a few overly-emotional, grieving women? It seems that something different is at play in our text. For first-century Israel, the process of anointing the body of a deceased loved one was a reverential act of respect. It had nothing to do with Egyptian-like embalming processes as some would propose.<sup>12</sup> Nicodemus had already applied spices to Jesus’ corpse (John 19:40). In fact, he had loaded Jesus’ body with “seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes” (John 19:39). A further application was unnecessary. It would only provide a little deterrent to the stench of death and decay. The women went to the tomb to simply demonstrate their appreciation and devotion for the Lord a final time.

The women loved Jesus deeply. Their days had previously been spent serving Him. They wanted one last opportunity to be of service. It is worth noting that Mary, Mary, and Salome wagered a gamble of some sorts through their trip to the tomb. Women didn’t customarily travel alone at dark. In addition, it was risky to be seen as a sympathizer to an insurrectionist. That’s why the disciples all fled when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:50). Despite the risk involved, the women made the trek to the tomb. They loved Jesus, and they wanted to express their devotion one last time.

The women are a model for us. Disciples of all generations should lovingly serve the Lord from the heart. May we serve Jesus, even when it costs us a lot. May we stay devoted to Him, even when the entire world seems hostile to His cause. May we serve Him to the best of our abilities, using our resources for His glory. May we cling to Him, even when it doesn’t seem to pan out or pay off. Like the women, may we be known for our loving devotion to the Lord!

### **Verse 3**

As the women approached the burial site, they “were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?’” (Mark 16:3). The three

---

<sup>10</sup> Schnabel, 435.

<sup>11</sup> Ferguson, 270.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, 399.

women would have definitely needed help to gain entrance to the tomb. They could not have opened it by themselves. Back in Mark 15:46, we saw that it took manpower to roll the stone door in front of the tomb. The women had witnessed the closing of the tomb themselves (Mark 15:47). They were well aware that they would need help in gaining access.

The original language of the text uses syntax that expresses personal interest.<sup>13</sup> The Christian Standard Bible rightly places emphasis on this with the phrase “for us.” Mary, Mary, and Salome were consumed by grief. They went to the tomb, hoping to have an opportunity for some sort of personal closure.

They were so overcome by their emotions that they didn’t think about the fact that the tomb was likely sealed. Spices had been bought and the trip had been made, but it never dawned on the women that they might not be able to actually see Jesus’ body. By the time they realized their predicament, it was too late. They wouldn’t be able to move the burial stone by themselves, so they probably wouldn’t be able to see their Lord.

Notice that the possibility of a resurrection was completely lost on the women. They had not thought of Jesus’ promises back in Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; and 14:28. As they trudged towards the tomb, their only expectation was death. One has said, “Clearly the women have no hope of the resurrection of Jesus.”<sup>14</sup> Aren’t we often like Mary, Mary, and Salome? Don’t we sometimes allow our hearts and minds to become forgetful of what Jesus has said? Isn’t it true that Resurrection realities are often the last thing on our minds? May we be on guard against letting the busyness, disappointments, and enticements of a fallen world blind our eyes to gospel truth. If we lose sight of Jesus’ promises, we will surely succumb to the same morose state of the women in our text.

#### **Verse 4**

As reality sank in and they realized they probably wouldn’t get to see Jesus, they looked up to see that the tomb was open. Mark records, “Looking up, they noticed that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away” (Mark 16:4). Mark the way in which the women looked “up.” Most likely they had been climbing a steep embankment to get to the side of a hill. Their heads were down as they made the ascent. Once they crested the top of the hill, the tomb was right in front of them. They looked up to catch their breath, but what they saw took their breath away again. The stone was rolled away!

Our text uses dramatic language to depict the magnitude of the moment. Mark uses a perfect tense verb in regard to the stone. It depicts a past action with permanent results.<sup>15</sup> He also uses a passive voice verb, implementing a construction theologians like to call the Divine passive.<sup>16</sup> The verbiage insinuates God was the one who moved the stone! The Lord had raised Jesus from the dead, just as Jesus had promised (Mark 8:31;

---

<sup>13</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, 400.

<sup>15</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>16</sup> Brooks, 270.

9:31; and 10:34). The women were ignorant of the meaning of the moved stone. Resurrection realities still weren't on their minds.

### Verse 5

Happy to know they had an opportunity to anoint Jesus' body with spices, the women advanced. To enter an ancient burial tomb required one to crawl on all fours through a narrow tunnel-like entrance. After crawling through the claustrophobic space, one would gain access to an open air in which bodies were placed.<sup>17</sup> When the women came into the opening, they saw a strange sight. Mark says, "When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed" (Mark 16:5).

It wouldn't have been too strange for the women to see Joseph of Arimathea in the tomb, since he had taken charge of the burial procedures (Mark 15:43).<sup>18</sup> The man they saw, however, was clearly not Joseph. He had an otherworldly appearance. His clothing indicated as much. It was unique. The language uses a word that referred to a long, flowing robe.<sup>19</sup> In Scripture, angels are often depicted as wearing such garments. See Acts 1:10 and Revelation 4:4.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the man's robe was "white." In Scripture, the color of clothing is evidence, as one has said, of "heavenly visitation."<sup>21</sup> We've already seen white clothing associated with Divine revelation in Mark's gospel (Mark 9:3). The young man in the empty tomb was an angel, a messenger sent from the Lord.

In response to what they saw, the women were "alarmed." The word refers to one who is "startled" or "awestricken."<sup>22</sup> The same language was used to describe Jesus' anxiety in the Garden of Gethsemane back in Mark 14:33.<sup>23</sup> The women would be dominated by such emotions throughout the narrative. In the next verse, the angel commands the women to not be alarmed (Mark 16:6). When the scene ends, the women rush from the graveside, trembling in anxious fear (Mark 16:8).

In a way, their fear was reasonable. Wouldn't you be scared if you saw an angelic being? Matthew 28:3-4 tells of the way in which Romans soldiers, who were undoubtedly tough and seasoned men, were just as afraid as the women. We should not find fault for the women's initial fear at the sight of the angelic being. It is their forgetfulness concerning Jesus' Resurrection predictions we should avoid.

---

<sup>17</sup> Schnabel, 436.

<sup>18</sup> Schnabel, 436.

<sup>19</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Brooks, 270.

<sup>21</sup> Schnabel, 436.

<sup>22</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Brooks, 270.

## Verse 6

In response to the ladies' fright, the angel commanded them, "Don't be alarmed...You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him" (Mark 16:7). In the Koine Greek, the angel's prohibition uses a verb construction that commands the cessation of an action in progress.<sup>24</sup> The command is strong. The angel wanted the women to be faith driven, not fear driven.

The young man's announcement contains great apologetical support for the Resurrection. One can see several features that support the veracity of the apostles' account. First, in making his announcement, the young man was intentional to describe the way in which Jesus died. He speaks of how our Lord "was crucified." The original language of the text uses a perfect tense verb. It emphasizes a completed state or condition.<sup>25</sup> It serves as a reminder that Jesus literally and physically died. Some try to disprove the Resurrection through a popular theory known as the Swoon Theory. It maintains that Jesus merely fainted or passed out on the cross. When He was placed in the tomb, He was not dead. He later revived and rolled the stone away.

Such an explanation is faulty. Considering the special beatings Jesus endured (Mark 15:15-20), it is highly unlikely He was able to roll the stone away. It is also improbable He survived what He endured. Remember how Simon of Cyrene had to carry our Lord's cross (Mark 15:21). Usually the executioner forced all victims of crucifixion to perform such a feat. Because Jesus received an additional beating (Mark 15:16-20) on top of the one normally required (Mark 15:15). He was unable to even carry the horizontal cross beam of the cross to the execution site. The blood loss, exposure, and infection from open wounds would have surely resulted in death.

Once He was crucified, Jesus died a relatively quick death. Normally, victims of crucifixion took a good while to die. Sometimes they would last for a couple of days. Such was not the case with Jesus. He died within a few hours (Mark 15:1 and 33). Why? He was beaten so badly that He was near death before He was even crucified. All of this underscores the fact that Jesus couldn't have survived the whole ordeal. He literally died. The angel at the tomb made this clear by speaking of the way in which Jesus "was crucified." The Swoon Theory is a man-made theory that has no basis in reality.

A second apologetical defense of the Resurrection is seen in the way in which the angel says "He is not here." Some sceptics scoff at the Resurrection by claiming Jesus' body was simply stolen. This theory is known as the Stolen Body Theory. One of two groups are often charged with displacing Jesus' corpse. Some say the Jews took it; others claim the disciples did. Both theories are unlikely.

If the Jews would have taken Jesus' body, they would have likely made it known when the burgeoning Church began growing at breakneck speed. Seeing the way in which local synagogues were being turned into places of Christian worship, they would have surely sought a way to snuff out the reports of a resurrection. If the disciples would

---

<sup>24</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

have taken the body, they would have created a story that would have made them look better. They would not have presented women as the first witnesses (Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1), and they would not have spoken of the way in which they themselves initially doubted the Resurrection (John 20:24-29). The Stolen Body Theory is a false, man-made theory.

Mark's account of the Resurrection disproves a third spurious argumentation against the resurrection. Some hold to what we could call the Substitute Theory. In it, they claim some one died in Jesus' place on the cross. Since the Galilean preacher was of another region, the folks in Jerusalem, it is thought, didn't really recognize Jesus by His physical appearance. A doppelgänger of some sort took Jesus' place and died in His stead. This theory is full of problems. First, would someone really endure such a cruel death in order to create a phony story. It is likely that the body double would have made the truth known at some point during the Roman beatings. Secondly, the historical accounts of the Gospels make it clear that those who saw the Crucifixion were well aware of who Jesus was. They knew Him, because they had travelled to Galilee on different occasions to observe His ministry (Mark 3:6 and 22). They had seen Him and they had heard Him teach. Even as Jesus hung on the cross, some of the religious leaders quoted content from His sermons verbatim (Mark 15:29). There is no way they had been tricked by a body double.

Human attempts at explaining the Resurrection away are always insufficient. The angel wanted the women to be assured of the reality of the Resurrection. He announced, "He has risen!" In the original language of the text, Mark implements a passive voice verb. It invokes the divine passive, signifying that God was the one who raised Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

The angel also told the ladies, "See the place where they put him" (Mark 16:6). The verb translated "see" is an aorist imperative in the original language.<sup>27</sup> It could be translated "Look!". The tense and mood call for an action with a sense of urgency. The angel commanded the women to look at the place where Jesus' body had previously been placed. They knew the place well, since they assisted Joseph of Arimathea with the burial process. Normally, a first-century Jewish tomb contained several shelf-like ledges that were carved alongside the interior of its walls. One tomb could hold several bodies in the bunkbed-like arrangement.<sup>28</sup>

The angel wanted the ladies to see the empty spot where Jesus had been laid. He knew they needed to know about the resurrection. Their hearts and minds had been blinded to the prospect of the event. Christ-followers of all generations stand in need of hearing a similar command. Aren't we guilty of being like Mary, Mary, and Salome? Don't we need to keep our eyes fixed on the reality of the resurrection? The event is integral to Christian faith and practice. If Jesus was not raised, there is no victory over sin and

---

<sup>26</sup> Schnabel, 437.

<sup>27</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>28</sup> Brooks, 271.

death. Paul said, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Don’t forget the resurrection! See! Jesus is alive!

### Verse 7

After announcing the reality of the Resurrection to the women, the angel instructed them to share the good news with the apostles: “But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you’” (Mark 16:7). Notice the angel’s mention of Peter. John will mention the way in which Mary Magdalene responded to the angel’s instruction by running back to Bethany to find the apostle. When she found him, she said, “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him!” (John 20:2). Apparently the women were still confused as to what actually happened to Jesus, even after the angel’s announcement.

Why did the angel place special emphasis on Peter? The apostle is of particular importance in the Resurrection narrative. He was the one who had previously made a great confession concerning the Deity of Jesus (Mark 8:29). Peter had been selected to have a special place in the upbuilding of the Church (Matthew 16:13-20 and Ephesians 2:20). Jesus had special concern for the apostle to hear about the Resurrection, because Peter would soon preach a sermon that would bring thousands into the Church (Acts 2:41).

However, the angel’s mention of Peter was probably primarily centered on the apostle’s need for restoration. Though he denied his Lord (Mark 14:66-72), Jesus was intent on restoring him (John 21:15-19). The angel wanted the disciples to know that forgiveness was available and that the Lord wanted to restore them to their places of leadership in the kingdom.<sup>29</sup> Remember that Peter was a contributor for Mark’s gospel. He provided the author with many of the details from the life of Jesus. We can imagine he asked Mark to include this special detail we see in our text. He was grateful for the Lord’s graciousness towards him.

The angel’s special concern for Peter is instructive for us. It shows, as J.C. Ryle has said, “the exceeding kindness of God towards his backsliding servants.”<sup>30</sup> Though we may often fail and stumble in our devotion to Christ, the Lord still wants to use us. Whenever we wander, He is willing to restore and forgive. He has an everlasting love for each of us. We have His Spirit within our souls (John 3:3 and Galatians 3:2). The Lord has equipped all His children with spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8). Though we, like Peter, may be imperfect and broken vessels, the Lord wants to use us all to bring thousands into the family of God!

The angel also told the women that Jesus was “going ahead” of them “to Galilee.” This was in accordance of what Jesus had told the disciples earlier. When Jesus predicted Peter’s denial, He said, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to

---

<sup>29</sup> Brooks, 271.

<sup>30</sup> Ryle, 281.



Galilee” (Mark 14:28). The phrase “just as he told you” in our current verse is a reference to Jesus’ earlier promise.

The village of Galilee was the place in which Jesus first called His disciples (Mark 1:16), and it was in the region surrounding the village that Jesus conducted most of His ministry (Mark 1:39). As a result, it is fitting that He had a post-Resurrection rendezvous with His disciples in the town. Both Matthew and John give details concerning the meeting (Matthew 28:16-17 and John 21:1-23). It is from this encounter in Galilee that the Great Commission was given (Matthew 28:18-20).

### **Verse 8**

Mark’s Resurrection account concludes with the following words: “They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid” (Mark 16:8). Notice that the fear of verse 5 is seen once again. This time, however, the fear is different. Matthew tells us the women had “fear and great joy” (Matthew 28:8). In our current text, two additional words are used to describe their fright — “trembling and astonishment.” The language conveys the idea of a bewildering fear.<sup>31</sup> The women were filled with a sense of awestruck wonder because of what they had seen and heard.<sup>32</sup> With hairs standing on end because of the angel they had just seen, they were filled with holy dread, but they were also hopeful that something otherworldly was happening. Maybe Jesus could still be alive!

Mark tells us the women “said nothing to anyone.” His words do not mean the women remained silent indefinitely. We know from other gospel accounts that they eventually spoke about what they saw.<sup>33</sup> Matthew tells us, “they ran to tell his disciples the news” (Matthew 28:8). Mark doesn’t mean to condemn the women for their initial silence. He only means to highlight the way in which godly fear first produced a reverential reflection concerning what they had experienced.

Throughout Mark’s gospel, we have seen that godly fear is often the appropriate response to the works of God (Mark 4:40; 5:15; 5:36; 6:50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18; and 11:32).<sup>34</sup> That idea is expressed one more time in our current verse. The women show that the Resurrection beckons God’s children to live with holy trepidation and reverence. Indeed, such a healthy fear is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7), and it is the heart condition that compels one to forsake the ways of the world (Proverbs 3:7). Mark shows us that a “sense of awe is the beginning of a new life of fellowship with a risen Lord.”<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Ferguson, 272.

<sup>33</sup> Schnabel, 439.

<sup>34</sup> Ferguson, 272.

<sup>35</sup> Ferguson, 272.