

Implications of Mark 15:42-16:8 “An Easter Message for a Post-Modern Generation: *The Facts Matter*”

I mentioned last time a game we used to play as children. *Diving for coins*. It was a great summer pastime. Someone would toss some coins in the water and you'd have to dive in and find them. You'd hold your breath and venture downward into the deep section of the pool, reaching and feeling along the bottom in search of a precious coin. Eventually you'd have to come up for air. Then you'd try again, and you'd keep trying until you found all the coins.

I suggested that when we study God's Word we never find all the coins. In fact, we never even reach bottom! That picture sums up what we've been attempting to do in recent Wednesday evenings.

On Sunday mornings, we have been journeying through the Gospel of Mark. In recent weeks we've examined what happened on the cross. This past Sunday I delivered a message entitled, “An Easter Message for a Post-Modern Generation: *The Facts Matter*.” This evening I want to take us back to the same pool and dive in again! There are more coins to be found!

When you study what the Gospels record concerning the person of Christ and His atoning work, many questions come to mind, questions that have to do with *clarification* (what does the text really mean?) and *application* (what difference should the text make in our lives?).

Tonight, I'd like for us to go deeper, to consider the *implications of Mark 15:42-16:8*. Our approach will be:

1. A Quick Overview of the previous study (5 minutes)
2. Discuss questions that the study raised (25 minutes)
 - a. Questions to clarify: What does it mean?
 - b. Questions to apply: What difference should this make in my life?

A Quick Review:

Main Idea: Mark 15:42-16:1-8 enables us to come to grips with two profound, life-changing truths relating to the work of Christ.

- I. Fact #1: Jesus was buried—that verifies that Jesus died (15:42-47).
 - A. Joseph requested permission to bury the body (42-43).
 - B. Pilate granted permission (44-45).
 - C. Joseph buried Jesus (46).
 - D. Two women watched (47).
- II. Fact #2: Jesus was resurrected—that verifies that Jesus is alive (16:1-8).

Notice four responses exhibited by the women...

- A. Response #1: Appreciation (1-3)

1. They exhibited devotion (1).
2. They encountered difficulty (2-3).

B. Response #2: Amazement (4-5)

1. The stone was moved.
2. An angel met them.
3. Jesus was gone.

C. Response #3: Alarm (6-7)

1. Don't be alarmed.
2. See the place.
3. Go, tell the disciples.

D. Response #4: Awe (8)

1. They fled in fear.
2. They said nothing.

Application: What effect should the facts have on us?

1. We must fear Him.
2. We must place our hope in Him.
3. We must trust Him.

The bottom line: Has your faith found a resting place?

Discussion Questions

Let's examine the account by asking probing questions. Again, some of the questions are for purposes of clarification, others for application. [Read through all the questions before beginning to answer them one by one]

1. Let's probe further into Joseph of Arimathea.

- a. What kind of man was he? What do we learn about him from his actions here?
- b. What questions do his actions raise in your mind?

2. Mark mentions that women were present at Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and at the empty tomb.

- a. What were their names?
- b. Why did the women go to the tomb? Yes, to anoint Jesus' body, but why? And what do their actions teach us about them?
- c. Why does Mark make sure we know the women were there in these scenes?
- d. What's significant about the lack of men in these scenes?

3. Look at the angel at the tomb in verse 5.

- a. How does Mark describe him?
- b. How did the ladies respond to him? They were 'alarmed' (5). Why?
- c. His first words to them were, "Don't be alarmed." Why doesn't he want them to be alarmed?
- d. What questions does the angel's presence raise for you, if any?

4. On Sunday I read the following quote which represents a common attitude towards Jesus, His death, and resurrection. It's an observation by Steven Gushee of the Palm Beach Post: *"A seminary dean told me 40 years ago that, even if someone dug up the body of Jesus, he would not believe in that cadaver but in the Jesus embraced by the community that proclaims his resurrection."*

- a. It's a case of redefining terms. When we talk about Jesus' 'resurrection' we have something very specific in mind—that Jesus who died literally came back to life. A heart that stopped beating on Friday began to pump again on Sunday, and so on. But what does this seminary prof mean by believing in the term 'resurrection'?
- b. This is why it is vital that we define our terms, or make others define their terms, when we are talking with people, listening to Christian music, reading Christian literature, and so on. Let's explore some other examples:

What we mean...

What the Post-modernist means...

'I've been born again'

'The Bible is true'

'I'm a Christian!'

5. We ran out of time on this question last time, so I'd like to revisit it...

I've suggested that one way to keep the cross fresh in our hearts and minds is to read and sing the great, cross-centered, cross-saturated hymns in our daily personal times with God (and for sure in our corporate worship as a church!). Let's define that.

a. What are some characteristics of a good, cross-centered hymn?

--it's objective rather than subjective; it's more than a song that "makes me feel good about Jesus"; that's because it reflects on what Christ accomplished, not simply on what Christ means *to me*

--it's reverent, not merely sentimental and certainly not flippant

--it engages the mind using word pictures that help us see the Savior as He suffers

--it's doctrinally rich and sound; every word contributes to the communication of truth (as opposed to settling for a deficient word just to make it rhyme, etc)

Let's look at the hymnbook for some examples...

E.g.—Look at #495 "Heaven Came Down". Note how the song expresses what Christ did in *my life*. That's good, but it's not reflecting on what happened on the cross.

E.g.—#493 "It Is Well with My Soul"; This is probably my favorite hymn. But is it cross centered? Granted, it mentions the cross in verse 3, but it essentially shows the difference the cross makes in our lives when trials hit. That's a good thing to ponder, but are we thinking about the cross when the hymn ends? Perhaps, perhaps not.

But there is no perhaps about some hymns, and we need to make sure we regularly meditate on and sing such hymns. For example, here are some cross centered hymns (#188 "At the Cross") (#175 "Hallelujah What a Savior!")

Observation: There are actually a small percentage of hymns that focus on the cross in our hymnbook. I'm not saying the hymns included are deficient. It's just few are thoroughly cross-focused.

Allow me to share with you some examples I found in another hymnbook, *The Trinity Hymnal*. Note how they don't merely mention the cross, but thoroughly engage our minds in pondering the cross.

E.g.—181, 183, 192, 193, 196

b. What are the benefits of singing hymns that focus on the cross?

c. What happens to us as individuals and as a church if we consistently sing songs that are NOT cross

centered?

d. Take 5 minutes and find a good example of a cross centered, cross saturated hymn. Then pick one verse out of that hymn, meditate on it, worship Christ through it, and be prepared to share it with the rest of us at the end of our time.