

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. Jesus was buried, which means He truly 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. Jesus was resurrected, which means He indeed is alive (16:1-8).
  - A. We see appreciation (1-3).
    1. The women exhibited devotion (1).
    2. They encountered difficulty (2-3).
  - B. We see amazement (4-5).
    1. The stone was moved.
    2. An angel met them.
    3. Jesus was gone.
  - C. We see alarm (6-7).
    1. Don't be alarmed.
    2. See the place.
    3. Go, tell the disciples.
  - D. We see awe (8).
    1. They fled in fear.
    2. They said nothing.

Make It Personal: Because of the triumph of the cross...

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

He is risen! Today we gather to celebrate the climax of the mission our Savior accomplished to rescue a helpless, undeserving people for God. We've been pondering this mission this past month in our study of Mark's gospel, and will be there again today.

We must remember the cross, and the empty tomb, and what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection. This is why we have a gift for you this morning, to help us remember, the survey the wondrous cross. Please express your thanks to a team of about a dozen individuals from our church that made the *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* frame. As you assemble it, talk with your children and grandchildren about the significance of the cross. And as long as supplies last, please take another and share it with a friend, and talk with them about what the Lord accomplished on that terrible, wonderful cross.

Now let's listen to today's text, and message entitled, "*The Triumph of the Cross.*"  
*Scripture Reading: Mark 15:42-16:8*

Several years ago *The Discovery Channel* aired a program called "The Lost Tomb of Jesus." The program had to do with the discovery of a first century tomb in Jerusalem that contained ten ossuaries (limestone bone boxes). Six of the ossuaries in this tomb have inscriptions on them, names in fact: Mary, Joseph, Matthew, and *Jesus*. The show suggested the possibility that these are actually the burial places of the biblical characters who bear those names and in fact contain their bones.

I read the following promotional on *Discovery Channel's* website:

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC in 2007.

“In the feature documentary *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* a case is made that the **2,000-year-old "Tomb of the Ten Ossuaries" belonged to the family of Jesus of Nazareth.** All leading epigraphers agree about the inscriptions. All archaeologists confirm the nature of the find...

“The documentary includes dramatic recreations, based on the latest historical evidence, illustrating accurate images of Jesus of Nazareth, his family, his followers, his ministry, his crucifixion and his entombment.

“Part archaeological adventure, part Biblical history, part forensic science, part theological controversy: this is a story that will be carried around the world.”<sup>2</sup>

That’s quite an assertion, to suggest one has discovered the bones of a person who, according to more than 500 first century witnesses, left His grave and took His bones with Him! What’s even more shocking than the proposed discovery of Jesus’ bones is the response by some that it doesn’t matter, that even if these are Jesus’ bones, the Christian faith still stands strong.

For instance, Steve Gushee of the Palm Beach Post said this in an article (Friday, March 09, 2007), “Christian Faith Shouldn’t Fear Box of Bones.”

*The claim that one held the bones of Jesus of Nazareth is highly unlikely. The documentary assumes much and conjectures more to make its case. Even if true, that should not destroy faith in Jesus' resurrection. It might restore a measure of spiritual integrity to a faith awash in false literalism.*

*Religious truth is seldom expressed literally but in images, with poetry and mystery. Resurrection stories are no different.*

*The disciples were convinced that the crucified Jesus was with them. They knew that his living spirit was the driving force in their lives and that, when breaking bread in his name, he was with them. They were convinced that Jesus was alive. That conviction changed the world.*

*The resurrection of Jesus is, for the faithful, a profound spiritual truth about the nature of God and God's relationship with his creation. They need not read the stories that tell of that wonder literally in order to embrace that truth. The resurrection is about new life, not old bones.*

*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.*<sup>3</sup>

Did he say what I thought he said, that even if the box contains Jesus’ bones it would not destroy faith in Jesus’ resurrection? Yes, that’s what he said.

In post-modernism truth is relative. Whether something really happened or not isn’t important. What’s important is how it affects us. So it doesn’t matter whether or not Jesus literally left the tomb. What matters is that the first disciples *believed* He did. They had *faith* that He did, even if their faith lacked the support of the facts. The facts don’t matter. Faith matters. After all, we all need something to believe in and if what we believe in is making our journey through life more pleasant, then great, believe it.

And yet, the facts do matter. We wouldn’t settle for a post-modern mechanic. Just imagine your response if your car wasn’t running and you took it to a mechanic who didn’t even open the hood, but instead put more air in your tires, and billed you \$129.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/tomb/explore/explore.html>

<sup>3</sup> I’m indebted to Al Mohler’s comments concerning Steve Gushee’s article; See [www.albertmohler.com](http://www.albertmohler.com)

“My car is still dead!” you complain. To which he replies, “It’s not really dead. The important thing is that you *believe* it’s alive.”

Indeed, the facts matter.<sup>4</sup> And this is what makes Mark’s gospel the perfect place to go this Easter morning. As we’ve been seeing throughout our series in Mark (which we’ve called, *The Servant in Action*), the facts matter to Mark. Why? Because they should matter to us. Again and again, he shows us what Jesus did, for Jesus’ actions are compelling and life-changing. And none more compelling than these two actions.

I. Jesus was buried, which means He truly died (15:42-47).

II. Jesus was resurrected, which means He indeed is alive (16:1-8).

### I. Jesus was buried, which means He truly died (15:42-47).

Does it really matter that Jesus was *buried*? Indeed. In the past critics said, “The Bible is inaccurate. They didn’t bury victims of crucifixion, but through their bodies in the garbage heap.” About eight years ago, archaeologists found a skeleton with a crucifixion nail through the back of a man’s right foot in a cemetery in England.<sup>5</sup> It verifies that while the bodies of many crucified victims were tossed into burial dump, some were given a legitimate burial.

Mark documents four historical events related to Jesus’ burial.

**A. Joseph requested permission to bury the body (42-43).** Listen to verses 42-43 “And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.”

Notice the timing. It was evening on the Preparation day, that is, Friday evening. The Jewish sabbath begins at sundown on Friday evening. A man named Joseph steps forward to take down Jesus’ body. John’s gospel tells us Nicodemus helped (John 19:38). Ordinarily, a close relative or friend would have requested the body, but in this case Joseph does.

Who was Joseph? He was from Arimathea, a village about 20 miles north of Jerusalem (the birthplace of Samuel).<sup>6</sup> Verse 43 says he was a wealthy, prominent member of the Council, the Jewish Sanhedrin, the very court that condemned Jesus the night before. Joseph had not consented to the decision, according to Luke 23:51, and in fact, was secretly a disciple of Jesus (as we’re told in John 19:38). Mark says he was a man who was “waiting for the kingdom of God.”

Which raises a question. Why does he go public now? Mark doesn’t tell us, but apparently, he’s decided he’s spent enough time being a *secret follower* of Jesus.

A few years ago I was sitting in an airport on a Saturday waiting for a flight home. I had my sermon notes and Bible in my lap. I was reviewing and getting ready for the following morning’s sermon. A lady was talking on a cellphone next to me and it was quite apparent by her language that she was not a Christian. I must confess that I found myself a little self-conscious, wondering what this lady would think of me if she read the words on my notes: *We are sinners. We deserve judgment. Christ is our only hope.* I

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<sup>4</sup> Post-modernism isn’t anything new. One hundred years ago the modernists made similar claims when they denied the supernatural and tried to recreate Christianity without the miraculous.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/crucifixion-roman-britain-fenstanton-cambridgeshire-b1971956.html>

<sup>6</sup> Wessel, 784.

could just see her making a scene, “Are you one of those people who believe the Bible?!” She didn’t say a word, and to be honest, I was glad she didn’t.

And that thought bothers me. Why am I so timid, so fearful of boldly identifying with my Savior? Ironically, the sermon notes I was reviewing were for a message entitled, “*Forsaken on the Cross.*” He was willing to die for us. Ought not we be willing to live openly for Him?

Joseph said it’s time, and went public. How did Pilate respond to his request?

**B. Pilate granted permission (44-45).** Let’s read verses 44-45, “Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died [usually victims hung on crosses for days]. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse [Greek *ptoma*, refers to a dead body, usually one killed violently] to Joseph.”

Had Joseph not stepped forward, Jesus’ body, at best, would have been buried in a common, criminal’s grave, and at worst, would not have been buried at all. Barclay says that often the bodies of criminals were often left for vultures and wild dogs.<sup>7</sup> It’s been suggested that Golgotha may have been called the place of a skull because it was littered with skulls from previous crucifixions.

You wouldn’t expect a Roman ruler to authorize such action for a man convicted of treason. But Pilate did, apparently indicating he recognized the innocence of Jesus.

Nor would you expect the body to be placed in the hands of a non-family member. But He was, apparently indicating no one else stepped forward. The disciples were gone. The women were there, but they lacked the means to provide a burial. So permission was granted to Joseph.

**C. Joseph buried Jesus (46).** “And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.”

Do you see the careful attention Joseph gave in the treatment of Jesus’ body? Mark records five specific details in verse 46. One, Joseph bought fine linen. Did he have trouble buying linen on the eve of sabbath? We’re not told, but people with motive have a way of getting things done.

Two, he took the body down from the cross. This would have been a gruesome task, which involved extracting the nails, and lowering a 150 pound plus body from the vertical pole. Keep in mind that according to Numbers 19:11, touching a dead body made a person unclean for seven days. This was quite a demonstration of love for this Jewish leader, especially at Passover time.

Three, he (actually they) wrapped the body. He had help from Nicodemus, according to John 19:39, who brought a mixture of one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. They put the linen around Him, along with the spices, “as is the burial custom of the Jews” (says John 19:40). “None of the accounts mentions washing the body, but that probably was done hurriedly,” says Brooks.<sup>8</sup>

Four, he laid the body in a rock-hewn grave. This speaks of Joseph’s wealth. Matthew’s account describes Joseph as being rich, and indicates that Joseph owned this tomb, and that it was a new tomb. John’s account says it was located in a garden (John 19:41).

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<sup>7</sup> Barclay, p. 366.

<sup>8</sup> Brooks, J. A. (1991). [Mark](#) (Vol. 23, p. 267). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

And five, he rolled a heavy stone in front of the opening to the tomb. In 16:4 Mark says it “was very large,” probably weighing a ton or more. You’ve likely seen the pictures. It was a large circular slab of rock that was rolled along a channel with the aid of levers to cover the opening. The rock was there to keep animals and thieves out.

So the question is *why*. Why does Mark give us all these details pertaining to Jesus’ burial? For that matter, each of the four gospel writers includes an account of Jesus’ burial. What are they trying to tell us? They want us to know beyond question that Jesus truly *died*. This is the *fact* of the matter, and the *facts matter*.

Throughout history skeptics have tried to discount the Christian message by asserting, “Jesus didn’t really die.” The swoon theory says he merely fainted on the cross, and was revived in the cool air of the tomb. But the fact that He was buried, and the way He was buried, makes it clear that the ones who buried Him were convinced that *Jesus did die*.

Friends, this is vital to the message we believe and preach. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul defines the gospel, “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day.” He *died* and was *buried*.

Again, the question is raised, “What’s the point? Does it really matter if Jesus died?”

My friend, if Jesus did not really die, then the problem He came to correct remains. Jesus said He came to give His life as a ransom payment for sinners (Mark 10:45). If He didn’t die, the ransom has not been paid. Which means that the penalty for sin remains (“The wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23). And if sin’s penalty remains, then there is no hope for sinners like you and me to ever enter the holy presence of God.

Yes, the facts matter, including this one regarding Joseph burying the dead body of Jesus. It’s worth noting again that Joseph buried Jesus at great cost to himself. He risked his reputation to openly identify with Jesus. He bought expensive linen. He donated his burial plot. He made himself ceremonially unclean.

There’s a fourth historical event that Mark records.

**D. Two women watched (47).** Verse 47 says, “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.” Why does Mark include what seems to be this incidental piece of information? Why does he want us to know that these two women saw where Jesus was buried? We find out in the very next verse. These women were the same ones who went to the tomb on Sunday.

Bible critics have asserted, “The reason the women found the tomb empty on Sunday was not because Jesus rose again, but because the women went to the *wrong* tomb.”

Is that a valid critique? Not when we consider the facts. Mary and Mary *saw* where Jesus was laid, just like the Book says.

How are you treating the Book, my friend? Peter offers this helpful counsel in 2 Peter 1:19, “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which *you will do well to pay attention* as to a lamp shining in a dark place.” This is the character of God’s Word. It’s fully confirmed. It’s like a shining lamp, and we should pay attention to it.

There’s good reason to pay attention to this Book. This Book is the product of God-feaung men who “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” as Peter explains in 2 Peter 1:21.

Practically speaking, how do we pay attention to the Book? We do it by reading it on a regular basis, and studying it, and memorizing verses from it. And when we find an apparent contradiction, we keep digging, and consult commentaries, for we know that God is trustworthy, and so is His Word. And this is why we place ourselves under the teaching ministry of this Book, in a local church, whenever possible. We pay attention to the Book.

“So does studying the Bible make me a Christian?” you ask.

Good question, and the answer is no. Listen to what Jesus told some religious people in John 5, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, *yet you refuse to come to me* that you may have life (John 5:39-40).”

This is why we study the Bible, that we might come to Jesus and receive life.

“I was smoking pot the first time I heard the gospel,” writes C. J. Mahaney. “People often ask me why I’m so confident in God’s grace. I explain that my understanding of Scripture and my own conversion experience leave me with no other explanation. God came looking for me. I’m a Christian because God showed mercy, not because I was worthy or wanting to be saved. No, I wasn’t searching for God. I was stoned.”

“It was 1972. I was sitting in my bedroom smoking a joint when my friend Bob began to share the simple story of Jesus dying for my sins. I’d grown up in the Catholic church and had never heard the gospel. But that night as I listened, God revealed Himself and regenerated my heart. I believed. The cross was for *me*. Jesus was *my* Savior. The worst of sinners, in the midst of his sin, was born again.”<sup>9</sup>

*’Twas I that shed the sacred Blood,  
I nailed him to the Tree;  
I crucified the Christ of God;  
I joined the mockery.  
And of that shouting multitude  
I feel that I am one;  
And in that din of voices rude  
I recognize my own.  
Around the cross the throng I see  
That mock the Sufferer’s groan;  
Yet still my voice it seems to be,  
As if I mocked alone.<sup>10</sup>*

The facts matter, and this morning we’re considering two facts that have worldwide implications. The first? Jesus was buried, which means He truly died.

“But wait,” you say. “Lots of great men have died. What sets apart the death of Jesus?” The answer is because of the second fact, the one revealed in Mark 16:1-8.

## II. Jesus was resurrected, which means He indeed is alive (16:1-8).

“It is only in the light of Easter morning that we can understand the Cross!” says J. D. Jones. And he is right.

Mark doesn’t actually include an appearance of the risen Christ at the tomb. Matthew does. Matthew 28:9 reveals that Jesus appeared to the women who fell at His feet. In John’s account there’s a description of Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:14). But Mark’s focus is on the effect Jesus’ resurrection had on people, namely three women.

What effect did the resurrection have on the women? For that matter, how should it affect us? We’ll observe four responses exhibited by the women.

**A. We see appreciation (1-3).** Let’s pick up the narrative at verse 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.”

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<sup>9</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>10</sup> Hymn by Horatius Bonar, taken from *The Cross Centered Life*, by C. J. Mahaney, p. 63.

Why did the women go to the tomb that morning? The text says the women went to anoint Jesus' body. The anointing was not for the purpose of preserving the body (the Jews didn't practice embalming).<sup>11</sup> Why then?

1. *The women exhibited devotion (1)*. It was a demonstration of love. Israel's hot climate caused corpses to decay rapidly. The anointing was intended to reduce the stench.

I remind you it was dangerous for the women to be associated with a condemned criminal, much less at His tomb. But that didn't matter to them because of their devotion.

But their devotion was soon tested. True devotion always is.

2. *They encountered difficulty (2-3)*. Verse 2 states, "And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb." In verse 3 we find out the question that perplexed the ladies as they made their journey that Sunday morning, "And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'"

Frankly, this was a major hurdle. The construction of first century Jewish sepulchers was such that these women could NOT have entered the tomb without help. And who would help them? The soldiers? Hardly. The disciples are in hiding. Who then? They didn't know. But love prompted them to do what reason would not.

Ponder that thought. Why did the women go to the tomb? It boiled down to one, simple desire. *To be near Jesus*. In fact, if you'll look back at verses 40-41, you'll discover an insight about these women. They followed Jesus and cared for His needs when He was in Galilee. And when He was on the cross, they were there with Him. And when His body lay in the tomb, they were there wanting to be near Him.

Sometimes we over-complicate the Christian life, which makes this scene so clarifying. Do you want to live a God-pleasing life? Then make it your number one aim to be near His Son. To be a Christian you must know Jesus. To be a strong Christian, you must know Jesus well. And how do we get to know Him well? By spending time with Him. Daily time in His Word and prayer. Weekly time with His Body, the church.

And I can't help but ask a probing question in light of this text. Where were the *men*? Mary and Mary and Salome were at the tomb, but where were the men? They of course were in hiding, bewildered, confused, uncertain about what to do next.

But what evidence of grace we see in these women! They too are bewildered and confused. Yet in the face of uncertainty, they do what they can to demonstrate their love for their Savior.

**B. We see amazement (4-5)**. What amazed the women? They confronted three surprises in verses 4-5.

1. *The stone was moved*. Verse 4 states, "And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large." How did that happen? It was in place when they left on shabbat evening. But someone moved it. And why?

They'll soon discover that it wasn't moved to let Jesus out. It's been moved to let them in, for there's something God wants them to see, and eventually, tell others.

2. *An angel met them*. Verse 5 says, "And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed." Matthew calls him as an angel, but Mark doesn't use the word "angel". He simply refers to him as a "young man". I'm not sure why. We do know that in the Bible, angels are not typically depicted as winged creatures. They appear as men, again and again. As here.

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<sup>11</sup> Wessel, p. 786

Yet the greatest surprise for the women the stone, nor the angel. In fact, it wasn't what they saw at all, but rather, *didn't* see.

3. *Jesus was gone.* The grave clothes were there. They see them. But the body, the body they had seen in that tomb on Friday, was gone.

The empty tomb raises a question for them. Where is Jesus' body? They need more than an empty tomb to interpret *why* the tomb is empty. Had the body been stolen? Was it the wrong tomb? They need a word from God to make sense of the visual evidence.

Which is precisely what our gracious God gives them in verse 6. And when He does, His answer elicits a third response.

**C. We see alarm (6-7).** Verses 6-7 are thrilling to read. "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. 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.'"

The angel gave the women three shocking instructions.

1. *Don't be alarmed.* Verse 5 says they *were* alarmed, but the angel's first words were, "Don't be alarmed!" There is a time to be alarmed, but this is not one of them.

2. *See the place.* As the KJV renders it, "Behold the place where they laid him."

Remember the seminary dean I mentioned at the outset, the one who said 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? Know this. The doctrine of the resurrection is not about some idea that was raised in the hearts of Jesus' followers. It's about Jesus' body, the very one that died and was placed on a stone slab. That body was resurrected, and that body left the tomb. So says this heavenly messenger.

3. *Go, tell the disciples.* Tell them what? According to the angel, tell them Jesus is going before you. Where? Back home, to Galilee, where your ministry started. And tell them you will *see Him* there!

And I love those words, "And Peter." Make sure you tell Peter this. Why Peter? Because he denied the Lord, and right now he's thinking there's no hope for him. But there is hope for him, and all who are like him. You will see Him, just as He promised, for He always keeps His promises.

So what effect did it have on the ladies? How did the women respond to what they saw and heard in that empty tomb? Their experience went from *appreciation* to *amazement* to *alarm* and culminated with *awe*.

**D. We see awe (8).** Verse 8 declares, "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."

Those are shocking words, unexpected words. After what just happened in verses 6-7, what we expect to read in verse 8 is this. "And so the women left with joy in their hearts, and told the good news to the disciples, who likewise then told it to others."<sup>12</sup>

But that's not how Mark ends the story. To the contrary, he ends the story by telling us the women engaging in one action and one non-action. The action?

1. *They fled in fear.* The word "astonishment" ["bewildered" in the NIV, "amazed in the KJV] is the Greek word *ekstasis*, which indicates a sense of joy as well as fear.<sup>13</sup> The news was just too much to grasp. So the women fled in fear. That's the action. And the non-action?

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<sup>12</sup> See comment by Brooks, J. A. (1991). *Mark* (Vol. 23, p. 271). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>13</sup> Cole, p. 333.



2. *They said nothing.* Mark specifically says they “said nothing to anyone.” He uses a word that means ‘dumbfounded’ (NEB).

Again, a shocking ending to an amazing gospel. “But it’s not the ending,” you say. “We still have verses 9-20 to go.”

If you have the ESV or the NIV you’ll read a statement in brackets right after verse 8, that says something like, “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20].” What does that mean? It means Mark likely did not write the final verses. That doesn’t mean what they say isn’t true, for it is. But it’s likely these verses were added later.

Why would someone add a final section to Mark’s gospel? Apparently, the ending shocked the first readers as it does us. It’s not a very inspirational ending. We expect to see joy and boldness, not fear. Why don’t we?

We’re going to address that question in greater detail next week, but I don’t want to leave you hanging. There’s something vital for us to see today, something we must not miss. Why does Mark end verse 8 the way he does? Why does he tell us that the women fled in fear and said nothing?

And the answer is, because that’s exactly what they did. And Mark wants us to know that this is exactly what they did.

Why would Mark want us to know that? For this reason, because this is how faith works in the real world. It was true for these women, and for us this morning.

According to Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” We are saved by faith, says Ephesians 2:8.

But God uses trials to test our faith, says James 1:2-3. And sometimes faith wavers. If anyone knew this from personal experience, John Mark did. Remember, this is the man who signed on to be a missionary with Paul, but abandoned his ministry and went home (Acts 13:13). That was in AD 46. Thankfully, by God’s grace, he was restored. And now, he’s writing this gospel, some ten to fifteen or even twenty-five years later (depending on how you date this gospel), so others will come to know the Lord he loves.

The point is this. Faith is not a straight line on a chart. There are often ups and downs along the way, and the promises of God must be embraced day by day. And if a person truly knows the Lord, his or her faith will grow and be proved genuine.

As it did for these women. It’s true that they fled in fear and said nothing...*at first*. But that soon changed. The other accounts make it clear that after the women collected their wits, they did a lot of talking (Matt 28:8).

What’s the condition of your faith, my friend? Perhaps you’ve never placed your faith in Jesus Christ. Why not today? Perhaps you have, but you’ve gone into hiding as did the first disciples. And now it’s time to good look at the evidence, and affirm your allegiance to Him who is worthy.

And what are the facts? Jesus was buried, and this verifies that He died. And Jesus was resurrected, and this verifies that He is alive. The facts matter, my friend. The facts remind us that there is more than agony at the cross, and mockery, and alienation. The empty tomb makes it clear that there indeed is victory at the cross.

Make It Personal: Because of the triumph the cross, three responses are in order.

1. *We should fear Him.* Think carefully now. If Jesus is alive, it means that He was powerful enough to conquer death, break the chains of the grave, and defeat the evil forces of hell. It is not wise to ignore someone with such power, but rather to fear Him.

Do you fear Him? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

2. *We should place our hope in Him.* I'll state it as plainly as I can. God accepts sinners who place their hope in His Son, and in His death as their substitute, and in His triumphant resurrection. Is that your hope? Do the following words reflect your heart's cry?

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood,  
Sealed my pardon with His blood, Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

*My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—my sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

It matters not who we are or what we have done, good or bad. We need to place our hope in Christ. The Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other name under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."

We must fear Him. And we must place our hope in Him. But don't stop there.

3. *We should trust Him.* We must trust Him for salvation, yes, but we must also trust Him for daily living. Friends, we are weak, but the One who conquered death is strong.

We all have struggles, including Christians. But the Lord invites us to trust Him and to learn to live in light of His death and resurrection.

One of the most compelling evidences of Jesus' resurrection are the transformed lives of His followers. Obnoxious Peter became a humble servant. Skeptical Thomas became confident. Judgmental, self-righteous Paul became the apostle who wrote the love chapter. Timid Mark became bold. Proud John became selfless.

Who changed these people? The risen Christ did. And He is still doing it.

**Ministry in music:** Joe Gulley will play a medley of the four tunes we have sung this month to the lyrics of "*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.*" Let's listen and reflect.

**Closing Songs:** #473 "*Victory in Jesus*" (vs 1, 3), then #213 "*Because He Lives*" (vs 1, 3)

**Closing charge:** Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning we continued to survey the wondrous cross by considering the *triumph* of the cross in Mark 15:42-16:8. What effect does this passage have on you when you hear it? How does it make you feel? What thoughts come to mind? What questions?

2. In verses 15:42-47, Mark gives us many details regarding Jesus' burial. Take some time, list as many as you can find, and then answer this question. Why do we need to know all these details regarding Jesus' burial? What's the point?

3. In 16:1-3, we meet some women who went to Jesus' tomb. Why did they go? What were they expecting to find? What did they actually find once they reached the tomb, in verses 4-5?

4. The women received a special message in verses 6-7. Who was the messenger? What are we told about him? What did he tell the women? What's the significance of the words "and Peter" in verse 7? What effect did all this have on the women as they left the tomb in verse 8?

5. Jesus' resurrection changes everything. How so? After sharing, spend time as a group adoring our risen Savior.