

Are you content with your life? Many people aren't. There are scores of people who this very moment are plagued by the thought, "I wish I could change my life."

One of the buzzwords in our country today is "cope." An adult woman who was a victim of abuse as a child is told she will be scarred forever, and that the best she can do is learn to "cope" with life. A person who suffers with depression is given the label, "personality disorder," and encouraged to enroll in psychotherapy which will enable the person to "cope" with their condition.

I find it interesting that the word "cope" doesn't appear in the Bible. Joseph, though he would probably be classified by psychologists today as a victim who should have been scarred for life for the emotional pain he endured (sold by his own brothers, and forced to be a slave and prisoner for over a decade!), did not just "cope" with life. Rather, he learned to flourish. Jesus Christ never said He came to earth to help people "get by" in life. He came to change us and give us abundant life. A Christian who copes is really a contradiction in terms.

Why? Because of an event that took place 2,000 years ago. Is true change really possible? Yes. In a few moments, we're going to consider the event that changed the lives of some people just like us.

This morning, as we finish our series on the "Passion Week of Jesus," we come to the climax of the ministry of Jesus--the Resurrection. Though Jesus lived an amazing, even perfect life, without the resurrection, His life would mean little to us. And though the Lord did a matchless work of love on the cross, if He had not conquered the grave, His cross would be little more than the tragic symbol of the unfortunate death of a martyr. But He is alive! The resurrection of Jesus Christ did occur! The grave is empty!

What difference can the resurrection of Jesus Christ make in our lives? The resurrection has the power to change people. We'll see how this morning.

Proposition: 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' burial makes it clear 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. Jesus' resurrection makes it clear 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.

***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.

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 resurrection have on us?

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

I. Jesus' burial makes it clear that Jesus died (15:42-47).

Mark spells out four events relating to Jesus' burial.

A. Joseph requested permission to bury the body (42-43).

Vv 42-43 "And now when the evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto 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 stepped forward to take down Jesus' body (John's gospel tells us Nicodemus helped; Jn 19:38). Ordinarily, a close relative or friend would have requested the body, but in this case, Joseph did.

Who was Joseph? He was from Arimathea, a village about 20 miles north of Jerusalem (the birthplace of Samuel; Wessel, 784). V 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 Lk 23:51, and in fact, was secretly a disciple of Jesus (as we're told in Jn 19:38). Mark says he was a man who was "waiting for the kingdom of God." Which raises a question, "Weren't a lot of other Jews waiting for the kingdom?" To which we must answer, "Not like Joseph was." What he believed affected what he did. The text says he went boldly to Pilate, a risky act which could have cost him his position on the Sanhedrin, if not more.

Do you see something? Joseph's doctrine affected his life. What he believed about the kingdom was seen in his outlook, his values, and his actions. Does your doctrine affect your life? Let me probe with an example. In the past few years, several of our church families have moved away to take other jobs. How do you decide whether or not to take a job promotion? Is it really a "promotion" if the move will be detrimental to the spiritual growth of your family, even if the salary is twice as big? It grieves me as a pastor when I see families move away from us, and a year passes, and they still have not gotten involved in a Bible-believing church. Let me challenge you. If you are considering a move, make sure there's a solid church there BEFORE you accept the position. Make sure your doctrine affects your action.

How did Pilate respond to Joseph's request?

B. Pilate granted permission (44-45).

READ vv 44-45, "And Pilate marveled if he were already dead (usually victims hung on crosses for days), and calling the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it from the centurion, he gave the body 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 (366) that often the bodies of criminals were often left for vultures and wild dogs. It has been suggested that Golgotha may have been called the place of a skull because it was littered with skulls from previous crucifixions.

C. Joseph buried Jesus (46).

Pay careful attention to the detailed care Joseph gave in the treatment of Jesus' body. Mark tells us five facts in v 46. One, Joseph bought fine linen. Two, he took the body down from the cross. Three, he wrapped the body. Four, he laid the body in a rock-hewn grave. And five, he rolled a heavy stone in front of the opening to the tomb.

Why does Mark give us all these details pertaining to Jesus' burial? Don't miss this profound reason--to show beyond question that Jesus indeed died. Each of the four gospel writers is careful to include an account of Jesus' burial. Skeptics throughout history have tried to discount the gospel by saying, "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 makes it clear that Jesus did die.

The entire gospel message rests on this fact. In 1 Cor 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. In He had not died, we would still be in our sins.

Joseph buried Jesus at great cost to himself. By the way, someone made an interesting observation about Joseph (Barclay, 367), "Joseph is the man who gave Jesus a tomb when he was dead but was silent when he was alive. It is one of the commonest tragedies of life that we keep our wreaths for people's graves and our praises until they are dead. It would be infinitely better to give them some of these flowers and some of these words of gratitude when they are still alive."

D. Two women watched (47).

V 47 says, "And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, beheld where he was laid." Why does Mark include what seems at first to be an incidental fact? Why does he want us to know that these two women saw where Jesus was buried? We find out in the next verse. These women were the same ones who went to the tomb on Sunday.

Bible critics have said, "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." Often, people who criticize the Bible the loudest know the Bible the least. The Bible is accurate. You can trust your Bible. How could a book that took over 15 centuries to write, with over 30 people contributing to its writing, how could that book be without contradiction? The answer is because in reality, the Bible has but One author. 2 Pt 1:19-21 says, "We have a more sure Word of prophecy...For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Do you trust your Bible? You ask, "How can I tell if I trust it?" Do you read it? Listen, I'm not a legalist, but I would suggest that if you are not spending personal time in the Bible at least 3 days a week, you're not trusting it. You're saying, "I can live without it." Do you memorize verses from the Bible? Do you share it with others? Those who trust it do.

We're considering two truths that have the power to change your life. The first is this. Jesus' burial makes it clear that Jesus died. "But lots of great men have died. Why is there hope for change in that?" Because of the second truth revealed in Mk 16.

II. Jesus' resurrection makes it clear that Jesus is alive (16:1-8).

Mark doesn't actually include an appearance of the Risen Christ at the tomb. Matthew does--In Mt 28:9, he reveals that Jesus appeared to the women who fell at His feet. John's account shows Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:14). Mark's focus is on what happened to the women. Notice four responses exhibited by the women...

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

Let's pick up the narrative at v 1, "And when the sabbath was past (the sabbath was over Saturday evening), Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him."

Why did the women go to the grave that morning? In going...

1. They exhibited devotion (1).

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; Wessel, 786). It was an act of love and devotion. Israel's hot climate caused corpses to decay rapidly, and 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.

2. They encountered difficulty (2-3).

V 2 "And very early in the morning of the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun." In v 3 we find out the question that perplexed the ladies, "Who shall roll away the stone for us?" Frankly, that was a major hurdle. The construction of 1st century Jewish sepulchers was such that these women could NOT have entered the tomb without help. And who would help them? The soldiers? But love prompted them to do what reason would not.

Why did the women go to the tomb? They had one, simple motivation--to be near Jesus. In fact, look back at Mk 15:40-41, and you'll see this comment about the women. They served Jesus when He was in Galilee. They were with Him at the Cross. They wanted to be near Him at the tomb.

Sometimes we make the Christian life too difficult. Right here is a great model. Do you want to be a successful Christian? Then make it your #1 aim to be near Jesus. Frankly, many Christians in our day are so busy fighting issues that they're too worn out (and angry) to spend time with Jesus. The testimony they give the world is not that they're FOR Jesus, but AGAINST issues.

And I can't help but ask a question in light of this text. Where were the MEN?! Mary, and Mary, and Salome were at the tomb. Where were the men? For that matter, where are the men today? Men, are you taking the spiritual leadership of your home? Do

you teach your children about the Lord, or do you sluff off that task to your wife? On the positive note, God is doing something amazing in the lives of men in America. Last weekend, nearly 200 men met at Scioto Hills with one purpose in mind--to be the men God wants them to be. Also last weekend, 70,000 men gathered in Detroit for Promise Keepers (and 12 other such regional meetings will take place in America this summer).

But that morning, it was the women who exhibited appreciation to Jesus.

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

What amazed the women? Three surprises...

1. The stone was moved.

V 4 "And when they looked, they saw the stone was rolled away." Never forget this. The stone wasn't moved to let Jesus out. The stone was moved to let the women in, so they could be witnesses of the amazing fact that the tomb was empty!

2. An angel met them.

V 5 says, "...they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were amazed." Notice Mark doesn't call him an angel (Matthew does). In the Bible, angels are not depicted as winged creatures, but as men. But the greatest surprise of all was the third.

3. Jesus was gone.

The angel was there. The grave clothes were there. But Jesus was not! Please remember that at this point for the women, an empty tomb only raised a question, "Where was Jesus' body?" They needed a word from God to explain WHY the tomb was empty. Had the body been stolen? Was it the wrong tomb? The answer came in v 6.

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

Vv 6-7 are thrilling to read. In them, the angel gave the women 3 instructions.

1. Don't be alarmed.

V 6, "And he saith unto them, Be not amazed. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen; He is not here."

2. See the place.

V 6 "Behold the place where they laid him."

3. Go, tell the disciples.

V 7 "But go you way, tell his disciples and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall SEE HIM, as He said unto you." A dead Savior can't save anybody. But Jesus isn't dead. How did the women respond to this fact?

D. Response #4: Awe (8)

In response to the angel's announcement, the women did two things (8).

1. They fled in fear.

The word "amazed" in the Greek of v 8 is "ekstasis," a term which indicates a sense of joy as well as fear (Cole, 333). The news was just too much to grasp.

2. They said nothing. (the word means "dumbfounded"; NEB)

That is, nothing at first. The other accounts make it clear that after they collected their wits, the women did a lot of talking (Mt 28:8). But at first, they were speechless. V 5 makes it clear they were "amazed." In v 8, they "trembled."

By the way, many Christians today have lost the sense of holy awe in their worship. We want to worship a "god" that makes us feel good. Yet did you ever notice how many times in the Bible, when people experienced true worship, they didn't feel

good about themselves. They loathed themselves. They cried out for mercy! When Jesus did the miracle in Peter's boat, Peter begged the Lord to leave, "I am a sinful man!" When Isaiah saw the Lord, he fell on his face and cursed himself, "Woe is me!" So too, when the women realized they were in a holy place, they trembled.

Listen. God didn't preserve this story to be a mere history lesson for us. He intended it to change our lives. Jesus' burial makes it clear that Jesus died. Jesus' resurrection makes it clear that Jesus is alive. But the question remains, "So what?"

Application: What effect should the resurrection have on us?

We must respond in three ways.

1. We must fear Him.

If Jesus is alive, and He is, it means that He was powerful enough to conquer death, to break the chains of the grave, and to defeat the evil forces of hell. My friend, we'd better not trivialize someone that powerful! We'd better not ignore someone that powerful. We'd better fear Him.

Listen, the Lord Jesus Christ will not settle for second place in our lives. He's not interested in our leftovers. He Who went nose to nose with our greatest enemy, death itself, and won, is not One we'd be wise to ignore. Do you fear Him?

2. We must place our hope in Him.

Since He is alive, we can be sure that He has a purpose for us and through us. Because He lives, we too shall live beyond the grave! We have hope for this life and the life to come.

Where is your hope this morning? Is your hope in your bank account? Young people, is your hope in the faith of your parents? Is your hope in the Person of the Risen Christ?

3. We must trust Him.

We must trust Him for salvation. We must trust Him for daily living. How can we experience real change in our lives? The key is given in Romans 6:10-11. God doesn't call us to cope, but to live in light of the work of Christ, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He lives, He lives unto God." That's what Christ did. He died, but now lives. What about us? V 11 says, "Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Are you a different person since you trusted in the Risen Christ? The disciples were! As you see the disciples in the book of Acts, they hardly seem to be the same people we read about in the gospels. They weren't. They were changed by the Resurrected Christ.

One of the best proofs of Jesus' resurrection is the change that happened to Jesus' followers. Obnoxious Peter became a humble servant. Skeptical Thomas became confident. Judgmental, self-righteous Paul became dead to self. Timid Mark became bold. Proud John became selfless. These people were changed.

Has your life changed since you trusted in the Risen Christ? May I speak directly? If you are a joyless, critical, unloving person, yet you say you have trusted in Jesus, I must ask you a question. What Jesus did you trust in? If you are a selfish, irritable, greedy person who claims to be a Christian, what Jesus did you trust in? You say, "Well, that's my personality type." Really, my Bible shows that when people truly

trust in the Risen Christ, He makes them new. Are you a new person? Do your life need to change? Do you want Jesus to change your life today? Trust Him.