

Sermon Transcript

Not Another Clickbait Story

Acts 10:34-43 and Mark 16:1-8 | Easter Sunday | March 31, 2024 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in the Risen Christ,

Through the eyes of a gospel writer, the story from Mark's point of view is straightforward and to the point. He's the first writer to have his gospel appear, about 35 years after the events he describes.

His story ends abruptly. No disciples. No special appearances on the road to Damascus or eating fish by the sea. Just the women, fleeing the empty tomb in terror.

Later editors would add more verses to describe what's happening.

It's almost as if the confirmed writing of Mark is like the early edition of the newspaper that goes to print before everything happens.

Like reporting a sporting event that isn't completed... or when an election is called too early (**Dewey defeats Truman**)

In our instant information age, the days of relying on a daily newspaper have given way to notifications or headlines pinging our electronic devices. (**NOTIFICATIONS** slide)

It can feel a bit much, can't it?

Because of that, journalists race to have the story reported first. Delivering accurate information as quickly as possible can be challenging!

But what if a journalist had to take the brief amount of Mark's information and create a headline that would get people to read their article while scrolling past it on their phone?

I suppose it would depend on whose point of view was writing the headline. For example, if the news was being reported by the empire, say the Caesar Gazette

A headline might read: "**Body of dead criminal goes missing; foul play suspected.**" I'm sure the article would tell us about those suspicious disciples who were hanging around, but kept denying that they knew Jesus.

Or what about the leaders of the temple that had him arrested for blasphemy. I'm sure their local journal would have a snarky headline like this one in the Sanhedrin Herald: **Body snatchers steal "Son of God"**

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Once the news leaked, the international agencies would pick it up and speculate, like the AP suggesting, **Galilee Man executed; 3 days later he's alive. Friends say he is haunting them: Forensic experts are studying DNA inside the tomb to further their investigation**

I would click on that article! Would you?

But, could it change my life? Would I see this and think that an executed man, killed by the government, could possibly be the savior of the world?

It sounds ridiculous when you say it like that.

And if we think it's crazy now, I must remind you that when it actually happened, it did not become instantly believable either.

Doubters, skeptics, there were plenty—even among the closest followers to Jesus didn't believe the tomb was empty because Jesus was raised from the dead (**EMPTY TOMB**).

People in power discredited sources and denied it happened.

It's in our human nature to be skeptical—to not fall for something.

Have you ever read an article or clicked on a link and thought, “wow, this is crazy! I can't believe this happened?!”

I've done it before—I'll read a headline without reading the article—and then text a friend “hey, did you hear about this???”

Only to find out I had been duped or misled—especially when I really wanted the article to be true!!!

Or when you get a “friend request” and you add the person you know—only to find out someone duplicated their account and it's just a scam.

In the age of Artificial Intelligence, bots, and people looking to spread misinformation, our collective radar is up high. We are worried we'll get tricked, hacked, made to look like a fool.

The story of the resurrection of Jesus has faced many challenges over 2,000 years. Plenty of questions have been raised, many skeptics have wondered if this could be true.

If you're sitting there wondering “how”, you're not alone. And it's ok that you feel that way.

Because the power and magnitude of the resurrection isn't a clickbait story meant to capture your attention for a few minutes.

Which is exactly why I know the story to be true.

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It's a story that changes our entire lives. It centers us. Easter is one day. It's the most important one—but it's the day that launches us into the world to be apostles of the good news.

The telling of the new life won through an empty tomb is a transformational moment for all who hear it told. That was the case for Mary and Mary and Salome—the first eyewitnesses. It will be the case for generations to come.

The story wasn't being documented for speed. It was documented to be shared, over and over again—to tell new believers about what Jesus has done.

The story lived on through the eyewitnesses who preached the good news for years to follow.

The resurrection is the culmination of a life following Jesus Christ who teaches and heals while preparing his followers for what's to come next.

We're here because those followers lived out the love of Christ.

We hear about Mary Magdalene, who remained by Jesus' side throughout—never abandoning him. Whichever gospel writer is telling the story, she is there. Ready to prepare the body—the first evangelist to share the good news.

Why is she there? Because of love.

We hear about the disciples, and especially Peter.

The last we heard from Peter, he was afraid to be associated with Jesus because that could mean death for him, too.

Peter witnesses the resurrected Jesus and he isn't afraid anymore. He has nothing to hide.

He preaches his eyewitness account in the book of Acts—he can't keep this story a secret.

We hear about Paul, who used to go by Saul when he persecuted and stood by while followers of Jesus were killed. Yet God even transformed his heart to be filled with the love of Christ. He becomes an essential evangelist to tell the story before smartphones, the printing press, or newspapers could distribute the story. Instead, he wrote letters.

We are the church. 2024.

The world around us is changing. We change with it. We adapt. We grow. We learn how to translate Christ into our modern context. We are the messengers. This is a place of love, grace, forgiveness.



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We don't need flashy headlines. We don't need gimmicks or clickbait.

But we never forget where it all started.

In an empty tomb.

That sprung forth a message we can't help but repeat.

We say it every year. It's our reminder of the love of Christ. The good news. The promise of new life. Here's our headline:

He is Risen. **He is Risen Indeed. Hallelujah!**