

Recently, one of our new family members here at CIC shared his faith story with me. I was struck by how his mother's death was an important part of his decision to follow Jesus. He had been listening to some podcasts by Jordan Peterson and this coincided with a down turn for his sickly mother. When his mother passed, he thought, 'I know she did not just disappear. There is more.' He researched all the questions he had and made an informed and rational decision to follow Jesus.

- The human heart that knows there is something beyond what we can know through five senses; there is an unseen eternal that we were created for.
- Solomon observed: 'He has also set eternity in the human heart (Ec 3:11 NIV).'

Twice this week I was called to deathbeds; both were believers. In both cases I was honored to share about when Jesus attended a funeral. Jesus talked about the resurrection: 'Jesus said to her (Martha), "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this (Jn 11:25-26 NIV)?"'

- Jesus then raised Lazarus from the dead.
- But the part I like is: you will never die spiritually even if you die physically – though faith.
- I told them that when they draw their last breath here, they will open their eyes and see Jesus face to face.

I believe that because of what we celebrate today: the destruction of death itself by Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection gives us hope for eternity.

The Resurrection

Mark 16:1-20



We are reading through Mark's biography. In reading these large segments we observe that ...

- In the first half, Jesus served people through miracles, deliverances, and preaching repentance.
- Here in the second half, Jesus is the suffering savior who purchases our salvation with his holiness.

Let's jump right in.

1. The Resurrection, 16:1-8.

'Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. ³On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. ⁵When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side (Mk 16:1-5a NLT).'

In this story there are facts and points that can only be known by faith and revelation.

Fact:

- Jesus died and was buried in a tomb, Mk 15:37, 42-47.
- The Mary's assumed Jesus was dead, v. 1. Because they brought spices, they assumed Jesus was dead. The spices were not for mumification, but to mask odor.¹ Anointing means they were going to put oil on his head, an act of intense devotion.
- The tomb was empty on Sunday morning, vv. 2, 6.

Earlier, 'Joseph ... took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid (Mk 15:46-47 NLT).' The two Mary's knew where the tomb was and perhaps saw Jesus laid out.

On their way, they remembered the 'very large stone.' They do not know ...

- That the Sanhedrin sealed the tomb or that the Romans posted a guard (Mt 27:62-66).
- That an earthquake and angel rolled the stone back (Mt 28:2).

They enter the tomb and are terrified. 'The women were shocked, ⁶but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. ⁷Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died." ⁸The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened (Mk 16:5b-8 NLT).'

The fact that the empty was tomb proved little.²

¹ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 585.

² 'It is significant that early Jewish polemicists never sought to dispute this fact. The story of the theft of the body ... simply confirms that the tomb was in fact empty', Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 588.

- For example, Matthew records that the chief priests paid the guards money to say that the body was stolen (Mt 26:11-15).
- The truth was countered with a plausible alternative narrative.

However, the angel revealed that ...

Revelation:

- He is risen, v. 6.
- You will see him in Galilee, v. 7. Earlier, Jesus said, 'After I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there (Mk 14:28 NLT).'

The resurrection gives us hope for eternity.

Unlike the fact of the empty tomb, revelation requires faith to believe that it was empty because Jesus rose from the dead.

I believe that Christianity makes the most sense of all the world's religions and philosophies; it is the only option that fits with reality. However, at some point our research and understanding reaches a limit, a boundary that requires faith to cross.

- The Bible says it is 'Without faith it is impossible to please God (He 11:6 NIV).'
- Revelation asks us to accept by faith based on our current knowledge.³

Throughout Mark ...

- The disciples are rather comical: they do not understand, they lack faith, and are very human.
- But these ladies have a measure of faith. Initially, they say nothing, but soon they tell the disciples.
- Mary Magdalene grasped the significance of the empty tomb by faith and believed the words 'He is risen (Mk 16:6).'

Let's pause and look at the significance of the resurrection for a moment.

2. Significance, 10:45.

The significance is found in Mark's key verse: 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NLT).'

³ Revelation often has 'no categories ... to understand and respond appropriately', Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 590.

- ‘A ransom’ - every day we exchange something of value for something of equal or greater value. I just exchanged \$750 for a tank of oil, and I am not happy to part with \$3.25 for a candy bar. I love to be warm and love sweets.
- Similarly, God loves us so much he exchanged his purity and holiness to for our sin and selfishness. ‘But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro 5:8 NIV).’

LOVE - It all goes back to the garden. Originally, like us, God wants to spend time with those he loves. But Adam & Eve’s disobedience brought separation from God and death to all their offspring.

1 st Adam	2 nd Adam
Disobedience, Ge 3:6	Obedience, Mk 14:36
Tree, Ge 2:17	Cross, 15:21
Death to all, Ge 3:22	Life to all who believe, Mk 16:16

God sent his son to this world to restore the broken relationship. We celebrate God getting close to his creation at Christmas, but the sin issue still had to be resolved.

Point for point, Jesus exchanged and purchased our salvation.

- His death was a substitute for our sins: ‘Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering ...⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ ... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Is 53:4-5 NIV).’
- His resurrection is a deposit guaranteeing that we who believe will never die. Death has been destroyed! ‘He will raise us also (1Co 6:14).’
- Paul states it like this: ‘For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his (Ro 6:5 NIV).’ Jesus’ resurrection gives us hope for eternity – like the downpayment on a house.
- How do we identify with Jesus’ death? ‘If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Ro 10:9 NIV).’

I implore you to put your faith in God. Do your homework and when you come up to the boundary of faith, believe. Faith brings more revelation.

Let’s continue with Mark’s conclusion.

3. Verified & Commissioned, 16:9-20.

'After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. ¹¹But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her. ¹²Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. ¹³They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them. ¹⁴Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead (Mk 16:9-14 NLT).'

Look at the disciples, they are grieving and crying; they are without hope.

Mark wants his readers to believe, so we are to see the witnesses. After all, 'A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Dt 19:15 NIV).'

Pattern of verification:

Mark 1 – Jesus, the Son of God

- Mark, 1:1.
- Prophets (Isaiah & Malachi), 1:2-3.
- John the Baptist, 1:7.
- God's voice, 1:11.

Mark 9 – Mount of Transfiguration

- Moses, 9:4.
- Elijah, 9:4.
- God's voice, 9:7.

False Witnesses, Mk 14:56-63 ('But their statements did not agree, v. 56')

Mark 16 – Post-Resurrection

- Mary Magdalene, 16:9. Mary Magdalene was the first witness of Jesus' resurrection.
 - First, this is significant considering that in the Ancient Near East women were ineligible as witnesses. Their testimony lacked legal standing. This would have been a problem for the early church if they had invented the resurrection, but the early church stood by the women's testimony because it was a fact.⁴

⁴ It 'can only be explained on the ground that it was factual', Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 589.

- Second, Mary as the first witness is a type of reversal. In the Garden of Eden, Eve saw that the food was good and pleasing to the eye. Eve was the first to taste evil and death. Mary is the first to taste the resurrection and new birth – it too was pleasing to the eye. John notes she wanted to hug Jesus (Jn 21:17).
- Third, Mark chooses this point to remind us of her deliverance from seven demons. The state in which Jesus finds us is not our final state. She is not only free from the demons, but God chose her personally to show his glory – which she now shares through faith.
- The resurrection gives us hope for eternity.
- Two men walking in the countryside, 16:12. The disciples did not believe the Mary's (vv. 8, 11), nor these two men (v. 13). They stubbornly refuse to believe.
- The 11 disciples, 16:14. Now they finally see for themselves, their doubts and fears disappear. Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith.
- My father once made a career change from selling electrical parts to selling ice cream. I asked him why he made the change. He said, 'For me to sell something I must believe in it. This is great ice cream. The electric components are okay, but there is not much difference between what I sell and our competitors.' How could the disciples sell the gospel if they did not believe in it?
- Perhaps their stubborn refusal to believe would help them help others overcome the hurdles of faith.

Just like the disciples, we are called to be 'fishers of men (1:17).' 'And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. ¹⁶ Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned (Mk 16:15-16 NLT).'" It is Good News, new of eternal life!!

We are not responsible for people's response to the Good News, they either have faith to believe or they don't (yet).

Mark's conclusion is concise and powerful: 'These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. ¹⁸ They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed.' ¹⁹ When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. ²⁰ And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs (Mk 16:17-20 NLT).'

They finally got it. Doubt and unbelief were gone, they believed and 'went everywhere ... preached ... and the lord worked through them.'

Signs will follow.

- Deliverance – through us, God goes up against powerful spiritual forces, forces that want to steal, kill, and destroy.
- Tongues – unknown tongues says, ‘God is here.’
- Snakes / poison – What is this all about? This is the only sign for the bearer of the gospel. We have already counted the cost (Mk 8:34-35) and gladly follow in Jesus’ path of suffering,⁵ but God’s promises divine protection
- Healing

As a church that believes in miracles, we must keep our focus on the right subject. We keep our eyes on Jesus not on miracles. We expect them to be normal, but we don’t seek them, they ‘accompany,’ or follow us. It is spiritually unhealthy to seek signs, but okay to regularly expect them.

Conclusion.

Because our dog of 17 years died a couple of weeks ago, we were talking about the strange things people do with ashes. Belle’s ashes were spread with some other animals. Some sprinkle their loved ones on the ocean or from an airplane. I recalled a story that one man did not want his wife to remarry and so requested that his ashes be mixed into ceiling paint for their bedroom.

But the best one is Brian Kelly, who in 1994 had the strangest request as he was dying. He worked for Independent Professional Fireworks of Osseo, Michigan.⁶ They rolled Kelly’s ashes into a 12” round fireworks shell and shot him off on August 12th, 1994, at a fireworks convention near Pittsburgh.

It was glorious: it trailed two silvery comet tails as it ascended in the night sky and then it exploded into red and green stars. You have got to admit that is spectacular.

⁵ ‘It is because Jesus has defeated death in his resurrection that those who follow after him can walk the path of service and suffering ... with confidence that they will also follow him in glory ... no shame, no suffering, not even death should deter them from following ... (it) is the path that Jesus himself walked’, John J.R. Lee and Daniel Brueske, *A Ransom for Many: Mark 10:45 As a Key to the Gospel* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023), pp. 115-16.

⁶ Craig Brian Larson, *750 Engaging Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), p. 567.

But we can do even better: 'Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Ro 8:17 NIV).'

- We will share in God's glory because we are his children.
- The scars and wounds of this life will add color to God's glory that will be revealed in us.
- 'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Ro 8:18 NIV).'

Let's go back to hope of eternal life we have: 'Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this (Jn 11:25-26 NIV)?"'

Do you believe this?

Put your faith in Jesus.

Pray.