

Mark 16:1-8 "The Resurrection for Ordinary People"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless. Let's just bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that from heaven, God, the Son of God, came to seek us, that he came to seek and save the lost. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know our frailty and our weakness, our imperfection, you know our sin, you know the good things about us and the bad things, and still Jesus came to save us. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall with gentle power upon us this morning, that we might have a sure and certain hope in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and that we will face it. We have a heritage of eternity with you when we put our faith and trust in him. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, your Son and our Saviour. Amen.

Please be seated. I've sort of been surrounded by death for the last couple of months. Some of you know that towards the end of January, early February, I had a bit of a scare. I wasn't that worried about it, but I had a bit of a scare as to whether I had a tumor growing in my lungs. Around that same time, the fellow who was the best man at my wedding came down with a very, very aggressive form of cancer suddenly, that ended up leaving him quite hospitalized, and after a short battle with cancer, about five weeks ago, he passed away. My mechanic, whom I've had for over 40 years off and on, he died suddenly at work just a couple of weeks ago. He was just a year older than me. The fellow was the best man at my wedding, the same age as me, actually. And on top of that, at one of the Starbucks that I go to, the one closest to my house, there's a young man of no... He's sort of an interesting guy. He's sort of interested in religion and Christianity, but he's definitely not a Christian, and he would say he wasn't religious, but he's been struggling with the fact that it looks like his dad is going to be dying soon. And there's all sorts of issues he has around that, and he doesn't quite know how to think about it. And then on top of all of that, just a week and a half ago, I preached at a funeral of

[3 : 32] Marion Yearwood, who had been a long-time member of this congregation, and she died. When I get to speak at a funeral, I'm very conscious of the fact that in most cases, it is probable that the majority of the people in the room are not Christians like I am. And so usually, when it comes to that time when I get to say a few words, I say something along this line. I say, it is a great honour and privilege that I have an opportunity today to speak to you. And I know as I speak that there are people here who would say that they're atheists, and some who would say they're agnostics, and probably some who would say they were apatheists, some who've sort of given up on the whole project of thinking about religion, or in any form. There are some of you probably who are putting together your own type of faith and spirituality from things which are precious and important to you, and there are probably some who are part of the great religions that are on the face of the earth.

But it is my humble honour this morning to stand here and share with you what my hope is as a Christian in the face of death.

And then that's what I go ahead and do. I talk about what my faith is as a Christian in the face of death. And usually I look at 1 Corinthians 15 or the story of the raising of Lazarus, usually 1 Corinthians 15.

And that's what I'd like to do today. I have a sure and certain hope that when I die, I will be resurrected. And it's not because I'm particularly holy or particularly virtuous. It's not because I'm a presbyter. It's because I've put my faith and trust in Jesus. And I think anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus, it might be hard to have a sure and certain hope. But my prayer is that over time, as you think and study and pray more and more, you will develop more and more a sure and certain hope in the face of death. Now, some of you would automatically just say, well, George, that's very interesting that you said that on a Sunday where you read a Bible text that doesn't have the actual resurrection of Jesus. Like, that's a very odd Sunday to pick to say this.

And, George, I grabbed my Bible and I see now why you said that I should pick up a Bible. Because, George, I see that just after verse 8 in chapter 16, there's these big things that say, basically, the rest of this stuff shouldn't be in the Bible. And that, George, just plays to all of my views that, you know, the Bible is just not to be trusted. You can't base your life on things like this. It's not to be trusted whatsoever. So, those are really, really good points. And I never want to have anybody think that they can't ask good questions. And in fact, if you're outside the Christian faith watching this or you're here, one of the things I encourage Christians is to ask good questions. Because you know what? You can't grow without asking questions. It's completely impossible. You might be indoctrinated or brainwashed, but if you actually want to grow, you've got to ask questions and wrestle with them. So, it's good to have these questions. So, before we go into, I'm going to talk about the resurrection of Jesus towards the end of this, or about two-thirds of the way in. But let's look a little bit, just pause for a moment about the fact that the ending of the Gospels, you can go and look it up, verses in most English versions. I think every modern English version will have something after verse 8 that says something to the effect that these following verses 9 to 20 shouldn't be in the Bible, because they're not part of the earliest manuscripts.

[7 : 15] And actually, rather than undermining your confidence in the Bible, this should make you confident in the Bible. It doesn't prove that you shouldn't. The people who talk to me about being, the Bible being like, untrustworthy are people who don't actually even read just a normal English Bible.

Because what this shows is that Christians really care, and we're very open to criticism, and we really care. We want to know what the original document said. That's what we want to know. And if it turns out that over time, and by the way, the number of the ancient manuscripts of the Gospels, every decade there's more of them. They keep finding more of them. In between other things, things, you know, hidden or lost in vaults of lots and lots of other types of manuscripts, they keep finding more and more and more. And what Christians have is they have this great concern to know what really happened and what really was said. And there's an actual science of textual criticism where they can take all of these. There's thousands and thousands and thousands of complete and partial manuscripts. And they can, there's a science actually, not only dating the documents that they find, but also looking at how the, how it's written, the type of print, how it's written. And they can trace things back so that every decade we get more and more confident that when we read the Bible, a modern English translation, that is what was originally written. And there's very, very good reasons to believe that the Gospel of Mark is an eyewitness-based history of Jesus written about 12 years or so after the death and resurrection of Jesus, while lots and lots of eyewitnesses were alive. So this shortened ending, rather than undermining your confidence, it's in every English version of the Bible. It's not something anybody's trying to hide. It's not like I have some secret knowledge of some secret text in the Vatican that's different. No, no. We want to know. We want to know. I want to know.

You should want to know. Because you know, the fact of the matter is, and I, you know, the, the young fellow who's been talking to me in the Bell's Corner Starbucks, he's just been sharing with me, he hasn't asked my opinion yet. I keep praying that it'll ask my, my opinion. But for obvious reasons that this young man is now grappling with, with the imminent death, you know, over the next month or two of his dad, if Jesus really rose from the dead, that has to change everything. Because everyone will die.

Everyone will die. And if Jesus actually defeated death, obviously that should be one of the most important things you should ever think about. So let's look. I'm actually going to say about the resurrection, the other thing about the, the no, the no resurrected body, you know that as I've meditated and thought about this and struggled with the text throughout the entire week, I actually think now that it's actually one of the most beautiful endings in Mark. That it makes actually my hope in the resurrection of Jesus and my hope that when I put my faith in him that I will have, that I will share his resurrection. My hope is stronger actually after, after looking at, at what this story communicates. But let's look for ourselves. So if you have your own Bibles, if you don't have your Bibles, it will be up on the screen. But if you don't have your, if you have Bibles, turn with me to Mark chapter, actually what we're going to do is we're going to start reading a few verses before Mark 16.

[10:43] And, and we're going to start reading at Mark chapter 15, verse 40. Mark chapter 15, verse 40. And here's how it goes. Oh, so, but what, what this is just after Jesus has died. He's on the cross, between the two thieves, he's died. And this is sort of right after he's died. And it goes like this.

There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger, and of Joseph, and of Salome. When Jesus was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him. And there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. And I just sort of want to pause here for a moment. This is actually a really important detail of the story, because what it's saying is that these three women, and there's more than three, we know from the other accounts, but these three women have seen Jesus die. They've seen the soldiers start to roll everything up because Jesus has died. And, and they know what Jesus looks like. This is really important. We, we sort of just take that for granted because we've had photographs for a long time. We have TV, we have Facebook and Instagram and X, and who knows all those other social media platforms.

But, you know, why was it that Judas had to go with the soldiers to capture Jesus in the dark? Well, that's because they didn't have pictures. So a lot of people would never have seen Jesus before. And then the soldiers could have gone and the apostles could have said, oh yeah, there's Peter, that's Jesus. And then Jesus goes away. Like, so they needed somebody who actually knew what Jesus looked like to go and capture Jesus. And so Mark is just saying this little tiny detail about the fact that not only did these three women see Jesus die, but they'd known him a long time. They know what he looks like. They know how tall he is, how skinny he is, how muscular he knows, but they know what he looks like. And so then the story continues and it goes like that. Verse 42.

And when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that's referring to a Jewish ceremony, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, that's the Jewish group that under Rome ruled Jewish affairs. So I'll read that again. Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage, and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Now, just a couple of things about this before we go any further. One of the things that the dodges that people make is that they try to say that what's being described here is not actually history. But one of the things about it is everything about Mark's gospel, none of it is once upon a time language. It's not fairy tale language. And if you actually just read the gospel of Mark for yourself, you understand that Mark understood the difference between history, parable, metaphor, and prophecy. Because he includes all of these different genres in his gospel. So in this part of it, he's not writing a parable, he's not writing a metaphor, he's not writing some prophetic vision of the future, because Jesus talked prophetically about the future and used prophetic imagery of the sun that darkened and the stars falling. And so

[14:04] Mark understands the difference between these things. He's not dumb. But in this particular place, he's writing history. That's the genre. And the other thing he does is that by giving all of these names, when he says Mary Magdalene, and this other Mary, and Salome, and Joseph of Arimathea, that's the ancient equivalent of giving footnotes. If he's writing this gospel about 12 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, based on eyewitness testimony, what he's saying is to the readers, he says, hey listen, go check it out yourself. Go to Jerusalem. Joseph of Arimathea, he was really famous. If he's not alive, just check him out and find out what he said about things and whether he became a Christian. And you can track all these people down. The names are part of his openness to intellectual inquiry and wanting to know more. And the second thing about this, let's listen to that, this last bit again here, the last bit of verse 40, 43. He took courage and went to

Paula and asked for the body of Jesus. Now just notice what Mark is doing now next is he's going to sell the death of Jesus.

Like what he wants you to know is that Jesus is dead, dead, dead, dead, dead. And nobody thought he would do, nobody thought anything would happen to him other than him staying dead. Joseph doesn't go and ask for the body so he can set up a shrine and a throne so that when Jesus rises from the dead, he can sit on a throne. No, he goes and asks for the body of Jesus to prepare the body for burial and in particular so that the body will not stink. Because when bodies decompose, they have a terrible, terrible smell. That's what's going on. Listen to what happens in verses 44 and following. So that's for the body of Jesus, verse 44. Pilate was asked for the body of Jesus. Then 44, Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether Jesus was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. All of these things emphasizing the death. And Joseph bought a linen shroud and taking Jesus down, Jesus had to be taken down because he's dead, wrapped him in a linen shroud because he's dead, and laid him in a tomb because he's dead. They've been cut out of the rock, and he rolled the stone against the entrance of the tomb to protect the body from grave robbers.

The whole story emphasizes the deadness of Jesus. And the next little bit that I'm going to read, and so if you're looking at your Bibles, you'll see there's verses which were added, numbers were added a long, long time later. But in the original language, it's very obvious in the original language that what what's been happening from 42 on to chapter 16 on, it's all part of the same story. They're all linking it together. So it's not as if they tell this story, then they move to a different story. It's all the same story which is being told. So listen to how these women's names are repeated again. Verse 47, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus was laid, and when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James in Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

So why are they bringing spices? They aren't bringing spices so they can make some really tasty falafel, hummus, and tabbouleh. They are bringing spices because they know the body is going to really stink. It probably already is beginning to stink. And they want to give as much spice as possible to honor the memory of Jesus who has died by honoring how they handle his body. They want the final memories of Jesus to be pleasant smells, not the stench of decomposition. They go there to deal with his body. Now the next bit, here's one of the things, there's several things in this story. If you pause, it has this, these wonderful, wonderful human details, like the type of things that go on with you and me in our lives. And that's why it's such a profoundly human story that in the midst of this profoundly human story, something transcendent and history changing happens. But it's a very human story. Look what happens in verses two and three.

[18 : 43] And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? Now, why is that a human detail? So, you know, some of you know, most of you know that I went to Zimbabwe a couple of weeks ago. And I was really nervous about going to Zimbabwe. I was worried about malaria.

I was worried about, I was only worried about poisonous snakes. And then my daughter, oldest daughter, reminded me that Zimbabwe also has poisonous scorpions and spiders. I said, thank you very much.

Now I have three things to worry about rather than just worrying about poisonous snakes. And uh, and anyway, so I go through a packing list. I go through a packing list. I have a checklist because I'm having to catch an Uber really early in the morning. And I have everything I need until I get to Zimbabwe and I don't have my toothbrush.

When I did the funeral for Marian a week and a half ago, I wanted to be really good to honor her. She was a woman who always really dressed up for church. She always wore these amazing hats. It's part of her Beijing heritage. And so I, you know, I made sure I had nice shoes to wear and a jacket to wear. And at the last second, I realized I'd forgotten to have my collar to go with my clergy shirt. And I have all of these things. And I get there and I start to, you know, get my shoes on. And then I realized I took the wrong prayer book. I, you just make, you know, you make plans and you make mistakes, right? That's very, very human. And that's what's so wonderful about this story. Oh, by the way, who's going to move the stone?

They had all the spices and you can just imagine the type of conversation they probably had amongst some of them. Like one of them is probably an optimist. The optimist won this battle, by the way, and said, yeah, yeah, we'll, we'll figure it out. Let's just go. We'll figure it out. You know, some were saying, maybe we should go back and get the men. The other woman said, come on. The men are completely and utterly hopeless. They're all still hiding. They're not going to come out of hiding to help us. You know, we'll sort it out. You know, another woman might say, I don't want to walk all the way back there. These spices are heavy. I don't want to have to carry them there and back.

[20 : 41] But the optimist wins. We'll sort it out. And by the way, that's really interesting by what happens later is it shows that optimism isn't the same as faith and it isn't the same as Christian hope.

Lots of people who aren't optimists become Christians and lots of optimists don't become Christians. Optimists think, I'll sort it out. The universe will sort it out. Faith is that God has sorted it out and God has made promises. Very different. Anyway, so they decide they're, they're, you know, they do go ahead, look at verse four. And there's another really wonderful detail here in verse four. And looking up, they go on ahead, and looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And I have a feeling that that was put in by the pessimist of the three women who probably said, that stone's way bigger than we remember. And they see it, and they go, whoa, that stone's way bigger than we remember. That really would have been a big problem.

But the stone is rolled away. And so then they decide, well, what are they going to do? They go in, and look at what happens in verse five. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. Just sort of pause. This is just such another human thing. So I don't know if I told people this, but when I was in my hotel room in Zimbabwe, there was a sign on the door before you went out, keep all the windows and doors closed so monkeys don't get into your room.

And there were lots of monkeys, especially just behind. If I looked out my back window, I could see lots and lots of monkeys. And Steve Griffin, he thought that just meant monkeys will come in if you leave with the windows open. But he was sitting working, and he heard a rustling noise, and there was a monkey in his room. And both the monkey and him made a loud squealing type noise. And fortunately, the monkey left. He didn't have to try to deal with the monkey in the room, right? Because, I mean, I wouldn't have the vaguest idea. Anyway, so they go in. They're expecting it to be empty, like, just the body there. And there's a young man, so they're alarmed. That's exactly what happened to any of us. And then what happens? Do they run out? Well, actually, the young man speaks before they can do anything. And this is what we see in verse six and seven. And he, that is the young man. And by the way, in the context, it's obvious that the young man is an angel. Okay, in the context. You can ask me about it more over coffee. But in the context, it's an angel appearing as a young man. And so the angel says to them, do not be alarmed. Now, by the way, the Bible knows that you can't just say something like that. You can't just say something that affects how you feel, right? But what would you rather he says? Yeah, you should be alarmed. Or, boy, are you guys ever in trouble? You don't even believe Jesus rose from the dead. Like, it might not have comforted them at first, but it would comfort them later. That the opening words acknowledging their alarm, their fear, and saying, don't be alarmed. Act of grace. And then he continues. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. This is emphasizing Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus from nowhere's will, who was dead, this fully human Jesus. He was crucified. And then it says here, he has risen.

He is not here. Now, in the original language, you can sort of get it with he has risen. But in the original language, it's far clearer that it's a passive, that Jesus was raised. It's not Jesus resurrecting himself, but God does it. God does it. And so this is really important because it's showing that Jesus is completely and utterly vindicated. His death on the cross, his time in the death, all of his teaching, he's completely and utterly vindicated. God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit raises God, the Son of God, Jesus the Christ, from the grave. He was raised. He is risen.

[24 : 37] He was raised by God. I'll read this again. He is risen. He was raised. He was resurrected. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. And that's, once again, really one of the things which is so wonderful about this text is it doesn't say, which is what the normal view is, and for many religions in the world and many spiritualities, they have this subtext. They say, take off your shoes because you're in a holy place. And when you're taking off your shoes to enter this holy

place, leave your mind outside with your shoes. Leave your brain with your shoes. But that's not what the angel says. The angel doesn't say, by the way, this is a holy place. Go back out. Take off your shoes. Plant your brain there and come back in to have a mystical experience. That's not what he says. See where they laid him.

See where they laid him. Look for yourself. You see, when I give my life to Christ, he takes all of me. It might be an emotional moment. It might be an intellectual moment. It might be, you know, some weird mix of yearnings and longings. Or, you know, who knows what. It's different for every person, either when you become a Christian or you realize that somewhere along the way you've become a Christian without realizing it. But the fact is that when you give your life to Christ, he takes all of you.

Takes your mind, your imagination, your will, your affections, your power to accomplish things, your sexuality, your identity. Everything that makes you you is taken by him. Everything that makes you you is redeemed. Everything that makes you you, except your sin, will be resurrected.

And he doesn't change you into an angel. He doesn't change you into a different person. He takes you with your frailty, your strengths, your weaknesses, your sins, your history, all of those things. He takes you and redeems you. And so your mind matters. And real Christians always understand that your mind matters. I had lots of things about the church that I grew up that were very good. But one problem I had in that church, and then the group of Christians that led, that were responsible, humanly speaking, for you to become Christian, is that when I had problems, they said, you just got to pray. No, brothers and sisters, that's not the right answer.

Don't act to me as if the angel said to the woman, go back outside. It's a holy place. Leave your shoes and your mind behind. Don't talk like that. Come look where he was laid.

[27 : 27] Very, very precious. And then he says, I'll finish reading the thing. We'll read verse six again. He said to them, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is 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. Mark's gospel, four times Jesus predicts that he will die by crucifixion and rise from the dead. Well, not all three of them, he, crucifixion, four times he predicts that he will die. But it's also a bigger thing. If you could put up the first point, Claire, that would be really helpful. The corpse of Jesus of Nazareth was gone from the tomb because God resurrected him. That's the message of this text. I'll talk about the women fleeing in a moment, but that's the message of the text. That's the message of the angel. The angel explains what has happened. And the angel says, by the way, I am just, because you see, the angel is just an angel.

Jesus is God, the son of God, the second person of the Trinity. And so the angel points to Jesus and said, just as he said, just as he said, I'm just the mouth of God. I am the mouth. That's the one actually speaking. And so the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth was gone from the tomb because God resurrected him. And so your mind matters, evidence matters. It shows that it's not as if Jesus does something against the father, but that the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, they're all working together. And Jesus is completely and utterly vindicated. What he taught is vindicated. You know, I mean, this is just an indirect thing about how to answer the question about the, you know, the lack of the resurrection appearance. But it's something that I, over time, it's become more and more clear to me when I deal with how different scholars deal with issues. At the end of the day, I say to myself, who would I rather believe? Somebody with a PhD for Oxford or somebody who rose from the dead?

That's not being anti-intellectual. It's actually thinking. Who would I rather believe? Somebody who rose from the dead? If you're curious, the Easter letter that I wrote got turned in, I turned it into a blog. I've made it about 75% longer, turned it into a blog.

It's actually the featured blog on the Gospel Coalition Canada website today, and it's that the resurrection changes everything. The resurrection changes everything. It really does. If it really happened, it completely and utterly changes everything. Well, some of you, okay, say, George, you've said you're going to talk about the resurrection and the fact that there's, Jesus doesn't appear and the women and how they, well, let's look at how the women actually act.

So what happens after the angel has said these things to them? Verse 8, and they, that's the three women, went out and fled from the tomb. So remember, the angel says, you know, just as he said, that there's no body here. The corpse is gone. He's risen from the dead. He was resurrected.

[30 : 41] Go and tell people about this and go to Galilee where you're going to actually see him for yourself. And then the women respond, verse 8, 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.

I'll read it again. 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. Well, a couple of things. The first, I just want to get a detail out of the way. I should have said this earlier. I got it out of order. If you could put up the second point, that would be really, really helpful. And that's this. Jesus interprets Jesus, and he interprets you.

Jesus interprets Jesus, and he interprets you. That's that phrase where he says, just as he said. You want to understand what has just happened? What did Jesus say? What did Jesus say? If you go back and look at how Jesus announces his ministry, he says the time is fulfilled, and the word there is that the telos has come. That's the actual thing, that the end has come. The time is fulfilled. God has kept his promises. The kingdom of God has come. Repent and believe the gospel. That's how Jesus launches the book of Mark. He launches his ministry. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come.

Repent and believe the gospel. Believe the good news. And what is the message? The king who makes the kingdom has come. The king who creates a kingdom by his death and resurrection has come.

With the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection, the kingdom has come. There is a new covenant. And what does Jesus say in Mark chapter 10 45? It's one of those purpose verses for the entire book. And he says, I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. In other words, he perceives people as we are under different types of bondages, bondages to alcohol, literal bondage in the case of slaves or women who are oppressed and conquered people like the Jews. And we're in bondage to sin and we're in bondage to the fear of death.

[32 : 58] And we are in bondage. And he has come to be the price that was paid that we might be delivered from bondage into freedom in the kingdom of love and freedom. And that's what he was accomplishing on the cross. And in Mark chapter 14, when he's at verse 36, when he's drinking the cup, doesn't want to drink the cup on the cross, the wrath of God, the judgment of God, the punishment of God that you and I deserve falls on him. That's the cup he drinks. That's what he has done. He interprets him.

The primate of the Anglican Church of Canada wrote his Easter letter. He doesn't believe in the resurrection. What a sad man. Go look it out. Doesn't read the... And his Easter letter is all about Gaza because he doesn't believe in the resurrection. Woe on me if I talk like that.

I can tell you right now, if I come to the conclusion Jesus didn't rise from the dead, I would definitely stop being your presbyter. And I can tell you what I would be doing this morning.

I would be home having a second coffee, reading a novel. That's what I would be doing. And if he didn't rise from the dead, that's what you should be doing. But I'm glad you're here because he rose from the dead. He rose from the dead. And Jesus interprets Jesus and he interprets you.

Interprets means he's the one who will reveal to you the meaning of your life, that your life will have meaning. You know, one of the things I was sharing with somebody who was just telling me a little while ago, and I mean, they have had a really, really, really, really, really hard time.

[34 : 40] They've had lots of things go against them. Betrayed by, you know, a fiancée at one point in time, betrayed by parents and siblings, and it's really, really hard. And I finally was able to say to her, the end of your story changes your story.

Isn't it you go back in time and all those things will be different, but the end of your story changes your story. When Frodo destroys the ring in Mount Doom, obviously with Gollum's help, that changes the whole story and everything he suffered. But if he had died at that last second, nobody would read The Lord of the Rings other than a couple of PhD students, because it would be the most depressing book in the history of literature. The end of the story changes the story.

What about the women? I love the women now that I've thought about it lots and lots and lots. Oh, sorry, I'm still out of order. If you go to the third point, that would be very, very helpful.

Here's the thing I love. We're getting into what's so neat about this whole thing, is that in verse, the third point is that God proclaims what he has done to save all who are far from him. God proclaims what he has done to save all who are far from him. You know, the big problem that skeptics have about the historical evidence for the resurrection is how on earth do they account for the explosive

growth of Christianity? Like, how on earth do they account for it? And on one level, I have, how do we account for it? You know, it's the case that in the case of Islam, Islam spread through conquest. But Christianity did not spread through conquest. They were not even an official religion for 300 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And they faced persecution.

To become a Christian meant that you had to break from the whole social fabric where you were in. There were costs that had to be paid. What explains the growth of Christianity? And I think what explains the growth of it is seen here in Mark. Out of all the Gospels, it's seen most clearly in Mark. [36:57] You know, scientists now say that the Big Bang accounts for how the whole universe began. You can't even say began because there was no time before the Big Bang. And so I said something like this in a clip once, and I had dumb people making comments about it. And anyway, there you go.

I understand all those things, but we still use words like began, okay? Like, don't be nitpickers who don't understand nits or how to pick. But, you know, they think the Big Bang, you know, everything at one time was like a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny thing. And there's just like bang and everything expands from that. And the universe is still moving apart. And that explains life and everything like that and how it began. But what I think we have to understand about Christianity is, in a sense, there's the Christian Big Bang. And the Christian Big Bang is from this unlikely moment of the women running away terrified. Somehow or another, the Gospel has spread to be the biggest religion on the planet. Mark is writing this 12 years or 13 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And he shows what happens. And he says, we're still here and there's more of us.

And here we are in Ottawa in 2026, and there's Christians still. And what accounts, what accounts for this huge explosion? And I think what accounts for it is, well, we're going through the Book of Romans. And all the time I say in the Book of Romans, all of Romans is centered around explaining Romans 1, verses 16 and 17, which begins, for I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. In the angel's proclamation, it is God proclaiming this. Nothing personal, Jono.

If God depended upon you and me and Josiah for our power and Emma, the best of the three of us, that would be a terrible plan.

We're hopeless. We really are. We're hopeless. Where does the power come? Why is it that faltering people like Jono tries to get up and sing and I try to speak and and the Gospel goes forth? It's because the angel, God, is proclaiming this.

[39:28] In Zimbabwe, I'd say, hallelujah, and everybody would yell amen. But that's the only explanation. And that's what's so wonderful about the last minute, if you could put up the fourth point.

Here's the thing. See, because you see, you look at, like, in a sense, what Mark is saying is, look what God has to work with. And if you want to find yourself in the story, you're not the angel. You're the women. Running. Terrified. Not doing anything that God actually told you to do. And just because God didn't, I should read it.

You are frail, inadequate, and sinful. So, go and tell what he has told you. Now, you see, we Christians, a lot of Christians love the story of Thomas the Doubter.

I'm going to coin a phrase. If I was an American, I'd get this 1-800 number and a web page, and I'd write 23 books, all variations of the same theme. That's how you make money in Christian circles.

[40:31] And I'd say, you have doubting Thomas and the gobsmacked women. And the gobsmacked women should be honored. Because the fact of the matter is, they express something very real.

When I was coming close to becoming a Christian, I was afraid that it might be true. If you're on the outside of the Christian faith looking in, and you're afraid that it might be true, you are the women. You're like many people. The women are gobsmacked. It breaks their criteria. It breaks their categories. It breaks how they were going to spend the rest of the day, how they're going to spend the rest of their life.

And here's what's so wonderful about things. It's, okay, so they didn't tell Peter. God shows up and tells Peter himself. They don't go to Galilee. He has to come to Jerusalem. Like, okay, that's why? It's because God's the power behind this. And he takes faltering, humble, not humble, proud, arrogant, foolish, misguided, inadequate people like you and me to try to get up on our hind legs and say to some person about Jesus died, and the end of your story changes your story, and God does the work.

[41 : 47] God does the work. That's what Mark's telling us. That's what Romans 1 16 is, the power of God. Salvation for all who believe. It's a power that comes from God.

We announce it. He does all the work. We announce it. What do we do? We tell what he has told you and me. That, friends, brothers and sisters, Jesus really did defeat death.

He really did defeat that which causes death. And he really wants us to be included. He explained what he did in the beginning and towards the end and even in the garden.

He explains it. And he died. And he defeated that which caused death. And he defeated death itself. And he did that to include you. And the more you study and the more you read and the more you think and the more you imagine, my hope and prayer is that you too, day by day, will grow into a sure and certain hope in the resurrection of the dead.

Invite you to stand. Another way for me to put my sermon is that God proclaims the tomb is empty.

[43 : 07] Jesus has been raised. Just as he said, go and tell. God proclaims the tomb is empty. Jesus has been raised. Just as Jesus said, go and tell.

Well, let's pray. Father, we thank you for these historical accounts of what you did for us in the person of Jesus, God, the Son of God, fully God and fully man, one person, Jesus Christ.

We thank you for his great victory over death. We thank you for his vindication. Father, we thank and praise you that you know we have doubts. We have questions. We have insecurities. We get hesitant.

We get worried about what people will think. We have all these things. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know these things, that you're patient with us, that you're kind to us, and that still you call us to believe in Jesus and then walk with us, even as we deal with these things.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would help us to ask good questions, that your Holy Spirit would help us to have the courage to take good answers, and that day by day we would come to a deeper and deeper trust in the gospel and have a deeper and deeper sure confidence in the face of death that we will live with you in resurrected bodies for all eternity by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, for your glory alone.

[44 : 33] And we ask and thank all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.