

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. So, I've got a question for you as we begin this morning's message, and it is quite a simple!

Question is, have you ever heard the term icing on the cake?! That's a question. Have you heard the term icing on the cake?

It is a term that means everything was good up to this point, but this event was above them all. You put the icing on the cake, yes, it's a beautiful cake, but the icing brings it all out. It's above everything else. It just completes it.

The icing on the cake. Some of you older ones, particularly the men, might recall how Muhammad Ali defeated George Foreman on October 1974, the rumble in the jumble.

[1 : 22] That was, for me, the icing on the cake, because it cemented Muhammad Ali's place in boxing history.

It cemented him as perhaps the greatest boxer of all times. Today, we come to an event in Jesus' life that was the icing on the cake with respect to his ministry and with respect to his authority. As a matter of fact, it was much more than the icing on the cake. Everything about him would rise or fall on this single event.

Indeed, everything you and I believe as Christians hinges on this single event.

Let us pray. Lord, O Lord, how precious is your word. And Lord, how grateful we are that you are the one who protects your word.

[2 : 53] Lord, you are the one who ensures that it is plotted in our hearts. And not only those who will hear it today, but those who will hear it years from today.

And Lord, we can imagine in that circumstance the one who is questioning, who is inquiring, who is searching.

And we pray, Lord, that as they do, that they will find some modicum of truth in what they will hear today.

We pray for transformation for all of us who are privileged to hear your word today.

Do what only you can do. In the name of Jesus, we pray. And all God's people say, Amen. Please turn in your Bible to Mark chapter 16, where we will be reading verses 1 through 8.

[4 : 10] Mark chapter 16, verses 1 through 8. Mark writes, When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

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 to the tomb?

And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe.

And they were alarmed. And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You see 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.

[5 : 25] There you will see him, just as he told you. 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. This message concludes our year-long series in the Gospel according to Mark.

You will observe that we are not considering verses 9 through 20. That is because the earliest manuscripts of the book of Mark do not include those verses.

As such, we will not cover them in this concluding series. You will also recall that Mark, in his Gospel, sets out to answer a very fundamental question.

Who is this man? Who is Jesus? Throughout the Gospel, Mark provides responses to that basic question.

[6 : 52] But now he comes to a place where he provides the most fundamental and the most important answer to that question.

In the verses we have read, I believe Mark wants us to see this. Jesus is the resurrected Savior. Go tell someone about it. I think that's what Mark wants us to see. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the resurrected Savior.

And our response ought to be that we tell someone about it. To tell us this story, Mark uses the encounter of three ordinary women.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, three ordinary women. assuming there is such a thing when it comes, assuming there is such a thing as ordinary when it comes to women.

[8 : 07] Women are by far, guys, I must admit, the finest and most important of the human species. fine.

Let's clap for that. That's the truth. That's the truth. That's the truth. Joshua, you will find that out if you don't know it already. I'm sorry, Josh.

It's the truth. One must have respect for the character and role of women in our homes and in society more broadly.

It is no wonder that while the men were hidden somewhere in Galilee, the women who, although they considered that they would need the help of men to roll the stone from the tomb, went alone.

To help us navigate through this account that we have read, we have divided our message into two distinct sections.

[9 : 16] The first is man's agenda revealed. Man's agenda revealed. And here, as we navigate through this message, we have in view what the women, these three women, set out to do.

What was their agenda? They had an agenda. Right? They wanted to do something. As we consider these women's agenda and how they executed it, perhaps we will find it instructive for our lives in some ways.

And then next, we want to consider God's agenda manifested. In other words, what, the women had their agenda, but God had his own purpose.

He had his own agenda. Yes, the women set out to achieve something, but God had something else in mind. Primarily, we will examine the circumstances over which the women had no control and the message of the angel within the context of what it means for the church today.

But before we look briefly at those subject matters, and this is going to be a short and a simple message, I tell you, I want to comment on the significance of the resurrection.

[10 : 50] Because that's what this is about. That is at the core, the heart of this passage. I want to comment about the significance of the resurrection.

Hear me today. The resurrection of Jesus is central to Christianity. It's central. That's it. Nothing is more important than the resurrection.

Not the miracles he performed. Not the demons he overcame. Not the sermons he preached.

Not the thousands who followed him. Nothing is more important than the resurrection. Without the resurrection, none of those things is important.

Indeed, all of those things would be fraudulent without the resurrection. Paul sums it up this way in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 14 and 15.

[11 : 56] Paul says, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

We are found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

If Jesus remains to this day in the grave, Christianity would be the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on humanity.

we believe that God raised Christ from the dead, as Mark says. We believe that Christ is who he says he is.

The point of the resurrection is fundamental to our faith. let's now consider man's agenda revealed in the actions of these women.

[13 : 18] The first thing that we observe is that these three women were well meaning. Look at verse 1 of Mark 16.

Verse 1 says that when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

So that they might go and anoint him. Early in the gospel, earlier in the gospel, Mark had made clear that at least two of these women were at the cross.

And they also saw where Jesus was buried. It is highly likely that Mark's intent of mentioning their names, Mark mentions their names, it is apparent that his intent was to make clear that there were in fact witnesses who could be identified, witnesses to the empty tomb and specific events that he is about to mention.

these were women who at that time in history were not regarded as primary witnesses.

[14 : 44] But here in this verse, we see that they were well-meaning. Mark says they bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. These women had an agenda.

they wanted to put spices on Jesus' dead body to keep the odor away. That was their agenda.

When you think about the objective that they had in mind in and of itself, there was nothing wrong with it on its face.

These women had an agenda that was motivated by their love for this man they had come to know. they wanted to do something special for him.

Now you know if it were me, unlike most Bahamians, you ain't touching no dead body. So these women must have really loved him. They wanted to do something special for him.

It would not surprise me if they often served Jesus when he was alive preparing meals and taking care of his laundry, for example.

[15 : 55] Perfuming him was their final act of devotion. These women, they wanted to put spices on the body of someone who told them in clear terms that after three days he would rise again.

and this point is made clear by Mark when he quotes the angel in verses 7 and 8 telling the women that Jesus is going before them to Galilee just as he told you, Mark says.

So despite the fact that Jesus would have told these women and others that he would rise again, they still thought it was a prudent, a good thing to go to the grave site to put spices on his dead body.

But perhaps you're considering that and you're saying to yourself, that's amazing, I know if Jesus had told me that, I would not have gone. And you perhaps say to yourself, I'm not like those women. I would never do that. But aren't we like that sometimes? Aren't we just like that? Sometimes we want to do good.

[17 : 29] Never mind the fact that we've not prayed about it or we have not asked the Lord's guidance. We have our own agendas. Our own agendas that we set for ourselves irrespective of what the word says.

What is to see further? As we look into the character of these women's agenda and how they follow through.

Take a look at how they didn't cover all the grounds. Take a look at it in verses 2 and 3. We see and very early on the first day of the week when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

And verse 3 says, And they were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

Imagine that. These women going to the tomb and wondering who is going to roll the stone away from the grave.

[18 : 39] Despite their good intentions, not all the grounds were covered. They were approaching a tomb that they knew had a huge rock at its doorway, but they had no way of rolling it away.

That's truly remarkable. But it's not unlike the way we often do things. One wonders how it was that such an important point could have been missed by these zealous women.

Could it be that they did in fact ask a few men for help, but those men were just too afraid to move?

Could it be a simple matter that we often face, even with our best laid plans, that every possible obstacle is not covered?

could it simply be that? Here we find one of the reasons why we as believers should take our plans to the Lord, because how many of you realize that we've got blind spots?

How many of you realize that we don't consider and contemplate all of the possibilities? So just like these women, who really read about thinking that they're going to do this special thing for Jesus, ignore this one fundamental thing.

[20 : 15] What else can we see here in these three verses? I want to say to you that we see here a great dichotomy.

There was a bit of dichotomy in what the women are doing, and what do I mean by that? I mean by that there is a contrast between what they should be doing, and what they are in fact doing.

Let me say that again. There is this struggle if you consider what these women are doing, between what they should be doing, and what they are in fact doing.

On the one hand, they loved him, they loved Jesus, but on the other hand, they are behaving as though they do not believe what he told them.

Now, I'm not fussing on these ladies, I'm not putting them out at all, but we got to talk the truth here. On the one hand, they clearly loved him, but on the other, they're behaving as though they do not believe what he told them.

[21 : 28] despite their good intentions, their attempt to perfume Jesus' body, even though he told them he would rise again.

This reality begs a question. Here's the question that their actions truly beg. Would one be so devoted to a dead person to whom one gave three years, three solid years of one's life, who claimed that he is life, but yet he died?

Could you imagine doing that? Could you give three years of your life to someone who claims that he is the life and the resurrection, then he dies, yet still you want to serve that person?

That's the contrast, that's the dichotomy, if you will. It seems almost irreconcilable. Surely, Jesus would be among the world's greatest deceivers if he does not in fact rise again.

Yet these women go to put spices on his body so that as his body decays, they'll be less, they'll be less odorous.

[23 : 14] but before you begin to, yet again, to criticize these devoted women, I invite us to conduct self-examination by asking, am I truly different from them?

Am I truly different? To help you answer that question, perhaps you might consider times when you failed to believe Jesus, or failed to exercise faith, and instead was overcome by fear.

It is a part of our fallen nature that we not only that we do not fully obey, and we do not perfectly trust.

These women were not fully obeying, and they were not fully trusting, and it was evident by their agenda. They wanted to preserve the body of one who said to them that he is the life and resurrection, and that he would rise again within three days.

So lest you stand in judgment of these godly women, think of yourself. Mark helps us to see, Mark goes on, and Mark helps us to see that God's agenda in the midst of these women's personal agenda to preserve this dead body, God had another agenda, upon which his church is built.

[25 : 08] And we see right up front the characteristic of God's agenda. Verses four through six, Mark writes, and looking up, they saw, this is the women, they saw that the stone, one, had been rolled back, it was large, two, entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were a lamb, and three, he said to them, do not be a lamb, you see Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, he has risen, we see in God's agenda manifested, that God did here in these verses, what only he could do, we see the supernatural coming into play, the stone was rolled away supernaturally, the presence of the angel was a supernatural event, and certainly the resurrection of Christ was a supernatural event, the women are not expecting the stone to be moved, they are not expecting to meet an angel, and surely they are not expecting the resurrection.

James Edwards in his commentary on the gospel according to Mark writes, humans were not involved as workers, witnesses, but only as witnesses.

God's agenda did not require humans' hands, he did it all by himself, and these women were mere witnesses to the supernatural event that God himself orchestrated, the removal of the stone evidences God's work.

The removal of the stone though, was not necessary for the resurrection to take place. Now you gotta see that, you know, God didn't come there and move the stone so Jesus could be resurrected. That would be a little strange if God needed to do that. If he needed to move the stone so that Jesus could rise and leave the tomb, that would be almost human.

[27 : 48] But we know from other places in history that the kind of body Jesus had, Jesus was able to walk through stone. The women are looking for a dead Jesus, thank God they did not find him.

Instead, they find an angel who first assures and comforts them. The angel invites the women to inspect the empty tomb.

James Edwards further writes, it is not the empty tomb that proves the resurrection.

No, the resurrection that makes the empty tomb meaningful. It is the resurrection that makes the empty tomb meaningful.

The empty tomb testifies that the Jesus who dies as a bodily being was raised as a bodily being. And it is the historical place and point in time that marks the transition between his two orders of existence.

[29 : 12] James Edwards goes on to write, along with early Christianity as a whole, Mark is interested in faith in the resurrected Jesus, not in proof of his existence.

It is an encounter with the resurrected Lord, not the empty tomb that produces faith.

Let me say those concluding words by James Edwards again. It is an encounter with the resurrected Lord, not the empty tomb that produces faith.

Edwards is right. The empty tomb does not by itself prove the resurrection. resurrection. It is the resurrection that makes the empty tomb meaningful.

Jesus rose in bodily form. Therefore, the tomb had to be empty. The resurrection was an event in history. It was not an imagination like some would have us believe.

[30 : 27] There were witnesses of the empty tomb and of the supernatural activity at the tomb. And there were people who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection.

In the end, in the end, as Edwards suggests, we know that it is not proof of a risen Jesus that saves us.

It's not proof of a risen Jesus that saves us. We have to hear this. but faith in the resurrected Jesus that saves us. It's not proof of the resurrection that saved you and I.

But it's faith in the resurrected Jesus that saved us. We didn't go about saying, oh boy, I've got to prove this thing to be saved. It was faith in the resurrected Jesus that saved us.

Faith that only God alone can give. As we continue in this passage, we see in verse 7, Mark says, but go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

[31 : 46] We see in God's agenda that God had a very specific intent. It's not ambiguous. the message of the gospel was given to three women.

Tell his disciples that he is risen. Fundamental, foundational to what we believe.

Tell his disciples that he is risen. And that instruction, those words ring through to us today. Tell a dying world that he is risen.

That our hope for resurrection is linked to the risen Christ. The message is clear and specific.

God's agenda is not a puzzle wrapped up in an enigma. Believe and be saved. The wages of sin is death. Tell his disciples that he is risen.

[32 : 49] Mark tells us that the women left afraid. No wonder they were bewildered and perplexed.

What does this all mean? Though doubt they asked, who is this man, Jesus, the whom we encountered three years and more ago?

what should our response be to these events? No doubt they understood and felt that they would be laughed at if they told anyone, especially someone other than his closest disciples.

These extraordinary women left the tomb having received the most extraordinary instruction that anyone in history has ever received.

Their instruction will simply tell his disciples that he's risen. Tell his disciples that he's risen.

[34 : 08] The angels still speaks to us today and tells us to tell the world that he is risen. Tell our brothers and sisters of like precious faith that he is risen.

Because how many of you know that we too need to be reminded that he is risen. And so today I stand here and tell you that in my heart he is risen.

I know that he is alive today. We see in these words of the angel.

We see in God's manifested agenda. We see grace. That's what we see. despite the unbelief, the apparent unbelief, the demonstrated unbelief of these women coming to anoint a dead body as if it would not rise again despite their actions which indicate what is in their heart.

The angel extended comfort emissary of God. He extends comfort and grace to them. The angel could have said salvation has escaped you because of your unbelief.

[35 : 52] But instead he showed what only he through God's clear direction could have offered.

salvation is not yours. It's not mine because the time that he spent with you.

It's ours because of the grace of God. That's what this angel is saying to us. That's what this angel is demonstrating to you and to me and to the world. It's grace.

It was not their action. It was grace. It was not what they did to deserve it. It was grace. In fact, the arrows pointed to them being excluded.

They were closest to him. They fed him. They ministered to him. They heard what he said. They saw him. They saw his miracles.

[37 : 00] But yet they wanted to preserve his body in the tomb. The women came to the tomb with an assignment to perfume his dead body.

They left with new instructions, spread the message that Christ is risen. A changed agenda. A changed purpose.

We see grace extended not only to these women, but to the disciples, including Peter as well, who had denied him.

Grace, you and I marveled and be thankful for grace. Thankful for grace.

And you know, if you're like me, you don't have to look far to be thankful for grace. You can look to your drive to church this morning and thank God that your salvation does not hinge on who you are, on your own perfection.

[38 : 15] Despite the shortcomings of the disciples, God completes the work of redemption. God's plan of redemption is grace motivated, grace enabled.

It is supernaturally based, requiring no human help. And we are to respond in belief, sharing the gospel.

As we conclude, who is Jesus? He is the risen Lord. He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Who is Jesus? He is the stone that the builders rejected, that has become the chief cornerstone.

If Peter is among those receiving the gospel, despite what he did just days prior, imagine you and me.

Because Christ has risen, we have hope in a certain resurrection. Because Christ has risen, we're commended, commanded to tell the story to the world so that believing they might be saved.

[39 : 43] Let us pray. Oh Lord, how grateful we are for grace. Grace ties these words by mark together.

Grace, Lord. Lord, thank you that it's not works that saves us. It's not our behavior that saves us. It's grace.

Thank you for grace. Lord, thank you because we read and we understand in scripture that your agenda was clear from the foundation of the world, Lord.

You would shower us with grace. Lord, we pray today in these concluding moments that others, Lord, who are present, who do not now know this grace, Lord, that you would shower them, those who are present and those who are watching remotely, those who will hear in the months and the years and the decades to come, Lord, that you would do a work in their heart.

Lord, that is our prayer and that is our belief church. In Jesus' name we pray and all God's people say Amen.