

# What It Means To Be A Follower Of Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, give us grace on this Easter day to sleep down and enter into the place of death, the place we fear, the place we don't understand, the place that marks the end of all our imagining and all our hope.

Then give us grace to hear as those first disciples heard, from the lips of an angel. The words, do not be amazed.

We seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they lay.

Grant us grace that we may see the evidence of Christ's resurrection. We may hear also the message.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. I am very anxious that you should follow closely that passage which has just been read to us as the gospel for this Easter Sunday, Mark chapter 16, verses 1 through 8, page 51 in the blue pew Bible that you will have in front of you.

[ 1 : 36 ] And this is the closing verses of the Gospel of Mark. And these verses give us what I would like to point out to you today, a picture of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

This is what it means to be a follower. Are you ready for it? The first thing it means is that you are probably locked into the conventions of the society to which you belong.

The Lord of the Sabbath lay in the tomb, but those who were subject to the Old Covenant would not transgress the Old Covenant to go and see the tomb before the Sabbath was over.

And so the followers of Jesus are locked into the conventions of the times in which they lived. The second thing about them is that it was women who went in first.

Now, you know how significant that is in our day and age. And I know from experience that time and time again, it is women who first discover the good news.

[ 3 : 05 ] And the proud and stubborn men in our society find it very difficult to go and do the thing that has to be done.

To bow down and come to the place of acknowledging the tremendous reality that is involved in the resurrection. The third thing I want you to notice about these followers of Jesus is that they were doing the wrong thing.

They went to anoint a corpse. A lot of people think that that's what we do mostly.

As a church, we pay respect to the dead. We're very good at it and know a lot about it. It gives a kind of hush and silent grandeur to what we do with our lives because we're involved essentially in anointing the dead.

that's not what it turned out to be. They did it because they loved him very much. So they set out boldly to do the wrong thing for the right reason.

[ 4 : 23 ] They were devoted to the Lord Jesus. That devotion was not as it turns out to become the embalmers of a dead corpse.

That's what they set out to do. They failed to recognize that what they set out to do was quite impossible because they'd seen the stone rolled across the mouth of the tomb.

They knew it was there and they knew that they didn't have any way of getting into the tomb to do what they wanted to do. And so the followers of Jesus are constantly caught setting out boldly and lovingly to do what is utterly impossible.

And that's a wonderful picture of faith that they set out to do that. They did it because they loved the Lord Jesus and they didn't stop to consider that it was an utterly impossible task and they would never have been able to do it unless in some way a miracle had taken place before them of the stone being moved away.

Then we discover that they were terrified when they found out what was in the tomb. They were terrified at that point where history and revelation come together.

[ 5 : 52 ] What you do every day in your home and in your work and in your relationships is that you add to the sum total of the world's history.

You become part of it. Maybe not a very significant part of it. Maybe not a part of it that will be retained in the chronicles of our day. But you live out the history of your own existence.

But at this point the followers of Jesus came together or came to the place where history meets with revelation, with understanding.

Where the normal process and events of life that go on and on and on, life and growth and achievement and illness and weakness and death and that event goes on and on and on and nothing seems to break the cycle of it and then suddenly revelation breaks in and gives meaning to it all so that not one single part of your life is without meaning.

When you discover the vastness of meaning that belongs to your personal existence, when you discover that and revelation and history come together, I think you will be a true follower of Jesus as these ones were when they came across the point where history which was the empty tomb and revelation which was the message of the angel from the empty tomb came together and they were terrified.

[ 7 : 49 ] they didn't know what to do with it and they ran away from it. They were commanded not to be terrified but the plain evidence of the resurrection completely overwhelmed them.

They saw the empty tomb and that's history and they heard the message and that's revelation. we know the history we need also to be overwhelmed as it were by the revelation.

A young man sitting at the right side dressed in a white robe he said to them do not be terrified you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified he has risen he is not here see the place where they laid it and so they were terrified at the point where they should have been caught up in worship then they're given further instructions as to what they're to do he says to them they're to go back to the beginning you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified go tell his disciples and be here he is going before you to Galilee and there you will see him you see who's appointed as the chief of the disciples Peter the one who singularly among all the others shouldn't have been qualified for the job and he was wonderfully chosen and appointed simply I suppose because of his consistent failure to be what he was meant to be and it's a heavy thing when the hand gets laid on you and you're called to responsibility as a follower of Jesus because you've had such a wonderful and rich experience of failure and therefore are singularly qualified to do what others couldn't do then Jesus says to them and I want you to go to Galilee because he had promised they would be a sheep without a shepherd and that he would come to them in Galilee so he takes them back to the place where they had started the gospel of Mark is kind of circular because if you look at the beginning of it it says the beginning of the gospel of Jesus

Christ the Son of God the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God so when you come to the end of chapter 16 verse 8 and you come right around to the beginning again because Jesus knew that they wouldn't understand the beginning until they had seen the end and then they wouldn't understand the end until they had been taken back to the beginning and the whole thing is wonderfully tied together Jesus met with his disciples and said to them alright let's go back to the beginning do you remember when I called you to be fishers of men do you now understand what that means do you remember when you questioned the authority with which I commanded the unclean spirit to come out of a man do you now understand what that means do you remember when I told a man in the synagogue with a withered hand to stretch it forth and it was made whole do you now understand what that means do you remember when the

Pharisees gathered together with the scribes and determined that they were going to kill me do you now understand why they did that you remember when the thousand gathered on the north shore of the sea of Galilee and they were hungry and we fed them you didn't understand do you understand now you remember the night when you were terrified in the boat the wind and the waves were about to swamp you then suddenly my command the winds ceased and the waters were still do you understand now when the deaf man was made to hear and the dumb man was made to speak and the blind man was made to see do you understand now so Jesus took them back to the beginning that's that's what the church is all about it's all about these things about people trapped in the conventions of society about people whom you wouldn't expect to be used by God being wonderfully used by God people who were extremely zealous out of love for

[ 13 : 18 ] God doing the wrong thing because they didn't understand that's what it means so often to be a follower or a disciple of Jesus to be faced constantly with utterly impossible situations but out of love to go ahead and do it to be caught in a place where suddenly there is such meaning poured into every part of your life and every relationship and every motion of your whole being so that that has eternal significance you and I are terrified by the wonderful reality of history and revelation coming together in our our own experience then the peculiar fact that singular qualifications for leadership in the church among the disciples of

Christ comes from the experience of constant failure then the necessity of having understood who Jesus is on this Easter morning as the one whom God for his own glory has raised him from the dead and when you suddenly understand that then you go back and start from the beginning to look at the whole of your life and the whole of Christ's teaching to understand that so that you can come again to recognize what it is that God has done for us in Christ well that's what the church is all about and that's what we're called to be that's where the church begins history and the resurrection the wonderful alchemy spiritual alchemy of turning the lead of trembling and amazement and fear I left one thing out one lovely thing there is the specific command of God is go tell his disciples and Peter and the specific response is they fled and that's so characteristic of us as the disciples of Christ do having been given specific commands to obey we run in whatever direction we can to escape that's why this fear and trembling which marked the first Easter morning is so much what we bring to the situation and what God in his grace and mercy can turn into the gold of faith and obedience fear and fleeing are turned to faith and obedience and that miracle it is undoubtedly and I tell you categorically that is the miracle which God purposes to accomplish in your life and my life and our life as we who are very inadequate disciples of

Jesus Christ come to celebrate this day to allow history and revelation to come together to find our own experience in an entirely new light because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and it's God's purpose to bring you to that place anew and fresh this morning God grant that as we pray as we worship as we partake together of the bread and wine of this communion service that all the circumstances of your personal history and all the fear you have will be taken in and by God transformed in the gold of faith and obedience as God in Christ by the Holy Spirit works in you his purpose of love towards you amen let us pray let us pray almighty and ever living God who by your holy apostle has taught us to make prayers and supplications and to give thanks for all people we humbly cry to you most mercifully to accept all that we can give our self offering our gifts for the aid and blessing to others our whole hearts we pray that you would receive these our prayers which we offer to your divine majesty calling to you to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth unity and concord and grant that all who confess your holy name may agree in the truth of your holy word and live together in unity and godly love lord in your mercy hear our prayer we cry to you also to lead all nations into the way of righteousness and so to guide and direct their governors their rulers that your people may enjoy the blessings of freedom and peace and grant to your servant elizabeth our queen and to all who are put in authority under her here in this country and this province and this city that they may truly and impartially administer justice to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue lord in your mercy we are in our prayer give grace oh heavenly father to all the bishops the priests the deacons to douglas to harry to archie to ernie to bill and jim who worship with us to all who serve in the office that they may both by their life by their doctrine set forth your true and living word and rightly and duly administer your holy sacraments prosper all those who proclaim the gospel of your kingdom among the nations here we pray this morning for sue and brian salter in zimbabwe to calvin collins and kenya to gordon edwards right here in vancouver and beth and matt allen and stony plain and pray for young life in the crisis pregnancy center to all your people give your heavenly grace and especially to this congregation that with meek heart and due reverence we may hear and receive your holy word truly serving you in holiness and righteousness as ambassadors to the world of that reconciliation which your son Jesus

[ 23 : 15 ] Christ brought us to help us to be reconciled with each other that the world may believe us when we speak the good news of that reconciliation in Jesus Christ Lord in your mercy hear our prayer we most humbly entreat you of your goodness oh Lord to comfort and aid all who in this transitory life are in trouble or sorrow need or sickness or any other adversity especially those whom now we name I pray for Marty and

Larry and Doris father we remember before you all your servants departed this life in faith and fear of you we bless your holy name for all who in life and death have glorified you imploring you to give us grace that rejoicing in their fellowship we may follow their good examples and with them be partakers of your heavenly kingdom so father god grant these prayers and may the whole world join in a hymn of thanksgiving for the great love you have shown us in Jesus Christ our Lord risen from the dead may our hearts and lives echo your praise now and always amen