

Mark 16:1-8 An Angel Proclaims the Gospel

What is the Gospel? Many ask this question. If we want to create an environment where the gospel displays the glory of God, we need to know what it is. And, after we know what it is, what do we do in response? Today's message is a simple one. In our text we find the first gospel sermon preached after the resurrection. And, it is preached by an angel from the empty tomb. I would like for us to look at this sermon more closely, asking two questions: "What is the Gospel; and what do we do in response to this Gospel?"

1. Jesus was crucified. Look at v. 6. The angel said, "**You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. . .**" In this first part of his announcement, he simply reminds these women that Jesus was crucified. He died. And these ladies were there. In v. 41 Mark tells us that they were looking from a distance. Then in v. 47 he tells us they "**saw where he was laid.**" They were eye witnesses to the death of Jesus. The night before, at the end of the Sabbath (6:00 pm), after the markets were opened, they bought spices in order to anoint the body of Jesus on the following morning. And as they came, they realized they didn't take something into consideration. They didn't know who would roll away the stone; for it was very heavy. But, not to worry; Matthew tells us there was an earthquake and an angel rolled the stone away. Alarmed and amazed, they entered the tomb. And Mark, in his very simple way, tells us there was an angel sitting on the right side, dressed in white. And, he has a message, the greatest message ever told. He first proclaims by way of reminder, Jesus was crucified. He died! This is good news!

When we consider the Gospel, which is good news, we must take into account the entire plan of God in sending his Son, which began in eternity past and will not end in eternity future. The Gospel includes the birth of Christ as God incarnate, the life of Christ as he active and passively obeyed every command of God, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the work of Christ in sending the Holy Spirit to his followers, and an endless volume of other truths about the person and work of our Lord. But, if we want to sum up the message of the good news of the Gospel, we must proclaim both the death and the resurrection. For now, we are focusing on the first part; his death.

This is exactly what the Apostles did after Pentecost. Listen to these words from the very first Christian sermons. In Acts. 2:23 Peter says, "**this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**" Then again in v. 36, "**Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.**" In cp. 3, after God healed a lame beggar, Peter preached another sermon saying in vv. 13-15, "**The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life. . .**" After this sermon they arrested Peter and John. Immediately, they preached the same message saying, "**Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified. . .**" Soon thereafter as the apostles continued to preach, they were arrested and put in prison. But, an angel of the Lord opened the doors and they made their way straight to the Temple preaching, "**We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised**

Jesus, whom you killed by hanging on a tree” (5:29-30). A little later Stephen is seized for preaching this same message. And when he is given a chance to speak in front of the high priest and all the religious leaders, he concluded with these words, **“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.”**⁵² **Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,**⁵³ **you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it”** (Acts 7:51-53). Throughout the book of Acts we see these same words. The apostle Paul sums up this point in 1 Cor. 2:2 by saying, **“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”** In Gal. 6:14 he says, **“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .”**

Today, as we look back and consider the death of Jesus, we stand amazed. You see, we don't have a resurrection, if there isn't first a death. And, oh how beautiful is the death our Lord! Many will be offended as we preach the death of Christ. But, we must preach this gospel! Think about the benefits and the accomplishment of the death of Christ. **“For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin”** (Heb. 9:22). **“It pleased the Father to bruise him”** (Is. 53:10) as he **“put him forward as a propitiation by his blood”** (Rom. 3:25). In the death of Christ, God accomplished what we could not do. A holy God, who cannot be approached by sinful men, punished his Son, so that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . . but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”** Today, because of the death of Christ, **“we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation”** (Rom. 5:6-11). This is the good news of the death of Christ. Now, let's turn our attention to the 2nd part of the angel's message.

2. Jesus is Risen. Look at the second part of v. 6. After reminding the women about his death, the angel says to the women, **“He is risen. He is not here.”** Then he says, **“See the place where they laid him.”** Before considering the resurrection as an essential part of the Gospel, I would like to mention quickly the fact that Mark rarely uses proper names, much less the names of women. In that time, Jewish men did not respect the opinion of women, especially in religious matters. Yet, Mark highlights these women. I think there are a number of reasons. Mark was following the example of his teacher, the Lord Jesus, who esteemed women greatly. As their maker, he valued their position as made in the image of God, and elevated them to their proper position in society. Also, Mark's purpose in naming specific women was to prove the resurrection as seen by eyewitnesses. In Mark, these women saw him die. They saw where he was laid. They were the first to witness his resurrection. If this were a fabricated story, no one would have mentioned women as the first to see the empty tomb? In this fact, I believe we see the historical reliability of the resurrection.

Over and over again we see the gospel preaching of the Apostles emphasize the resurrection. In Acts 2:29-32, Peter says, **“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”**³⁰ **Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would**

set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² **This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.**” In his second sermon in cp. 3 he says, **“and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”** In Acts 13, Paul preaches these words in Antioch: **“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus. . .”**

Now, I must ask, *“Why is the resurrection good news?”* More specifically, what exactly is it about the resurrection of Christ for the Christian that we can really say, ‘this is good news?’ What is the essential meaning behind the angel’s words, *“He is risen; He is not here?”* I found many reasons according to the Scriptures. Let’s first turn to 1 Cor. 15 to begin.

Reason 1: The Resurrection of Christ proves there is a general resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:12-13 says, **“Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.”**

Reason 2: He is the first to conquer death and those who believe in him will also be raised like him. In 20-21 we read, **“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.”**

Reason 3: The resurrection of Christ declares that He reigns even now. He is seated at the right hand of God. Verse 25 says, **“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”** All things are under his feet. Paul says in Rom. 1:4: He **“was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Reason 4: The resurrection is a beginning to the end. (v. 24) **“He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.”**

Reason 5: The resurrection of Christ gives us clear purpose in this life. (v. 32) **“If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”**

Reason 6: The resurrection of Christ ensures the resurrection of our own bodies. (vv. 35-41; 52-53) **For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”**

Reason 7: The resurrection secures a glorious body, incorruptible, baring the image of the 2nd Adam, Christ. (vv. 42-49) V. 49 says, **“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”**

Reason 8: The resurrection of Christ guarantees a final day of judgment. (vv. 24-25) Paul also says in Acts 17:31 in his sermon in Athens, **“because he has fixed a day on which he will**

judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Reason 9: The resurrection of Christ ensures that our preaching is valid. It has basis. V. 14 says, “**And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.**”

Reason 10: The resurrection of Christ proves that our faith is real. This same verse says that our faith is real.

Reason 11: The resurrection of Christ ensures that our sins are forgiven. Verse 17 says, “**And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**” At this point you may be thinking, what does the resurrection of Christ have to do with my sins being forgiven? I thought my sins are forgiven because he paid my sin debt on the cross. But, Paul says if Christ is not risen, you are still in your sins. (See Rom. 4:24-25)

Here are a couple other reasons apart from 1 Cor. 15.

Reason 12: The resurrection of Christ proves his word is true. In the end, “He told them so” (Mark 16:7b). They affirm his words in cp. 13 when he said, “**These things will pass away, but my word will stand forever.**” (We can trust the words of God.)

Reason 13: The resurrection of Christ ensures that we walk in newness of life; and this by the Spirit. In other words, if you are in Christ today, your sins are forgiven, but you also have been given newness of life with supernatural power to overcome sin. “**Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God**” (Rom. 7:4).

Before we move to the next point, I would like to simply say that the Gospel message can be summed up in this: Jesus was crucified. Now, he is risen. In his death, he took care of our sin problem. In his life, he conquered death, and will lead us to heaven. We cannot have one without the other. There is nothing more important than these two facts this morning.

I could certainly preach a sermon on each of these truths, and even go on further with other implications and applications from both the cross and the resurrection. But, for now, we must try and bring this to a close by asking, “*What is our response to this Gospel Message?*” Our answer is found in the angel’s two commands to the women. The first is. . .

3. Do not be afraid. We see this in the angel’s first command to the women in v. 6: “**Do not be alarmed.**” The KJV says do not be “**affrighted.**” The NIV says, “**Do not be amazed.**” As they approached the empty tomb and found it empty and saw the angel, he first addressed their primary concern; fear. I believe he was saying, “*Calm down. Take a deep breath. I have good news.*” You see, the women had come to the tomb with heavy hearts at the thought of physical death and what had just happened to their friend. And the angel was saying, “*You came here thinking about terminal, finite, conclusive death, but **Do not fear. He is not here. And no one***”

has removed his body. He is risen! You are consumed with death, but the crucified One is consumed with life.”

In this announcement to the women, the angel establishes continuity between the historical Jesus and the resurrected Jesus. The one whom the angel invites them to know is the one whom they have known for years. The announcement of the angel is literally the *gospel*, good news, and the place from which the gospel is preached is the empty tomb that both received and gave up the Crucified One. At that very moment and in that tomb, the women were witnessing “*the kingdom of God come with power.*” Do you remember the words of Jesus in 9:1? “**Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.**” In these words the angel wasn’t inviting the women to trust in an empty tomb, but in a resurrected Lord. It was Jesus they were seeking. And, Jesus they will see, just as he said (v. 7b). Therefore, do not be afraid.

Today, there is great consolation and comfort in the fact that our God is not a god of the dead, but a God of the living. To live is Christ, but to die is gain. Today, if you are in Christ, **you are buried with him in baptism, but you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead**” (Col 2:12). If you are in Christ, do not fear because you have been **crucified with Christ, nevertheless you live, and the life you now live you live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved and gave himself for you** (Gal. 2:20). **God raised Jesus from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.** (1 Pet.1:21).

“**What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?** ³² **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?** ³³ **Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.** ³⁴ **Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.** ³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”** (Rom. 8:31-35). On the other hand, if you are not in Christ today, you have not been buried with him spiritually in baptism. You have not been raised with him in his powerful resurrection. If this is true, you should be fearful because you are still dead in your trespasses and sins.

4. (But instead,) Go and Tell. Look at v. 7. “**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.**” This is the angel’s 2nd command: Go and Tell. It is interesting that he mentions Peter’s name. Remember, Peter was the eye witness for Mark. But for our purpose this morning, this is our proper response to the Gospel: Go and tell. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, all authority has been given to him and he now gives it to us. Now, go and tell the world.

We can do all kinds of social good things in this world as Christians. We can build hospitals, dig wells, feed the poor, teach the illiterate, and love our neighbors in millions of ways, but if we do not repeat the message of the angel in the process we will not do what is the best thing to our neighbor. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God.

This is our message. See 1 Cor. 15:3-4 **“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, . . .”**

We must say with the Apostle Paul, **“I am eager to preach the gospel. . .¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”** (Rom. 1:15-16). We must pray **“that words may be given to us in opening our mouths boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel”** (Eph. 6:19).