

"Just as HE told you." Mark 15:16- 16:8

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The Gospel According to Mark | July 28, 2026 | Hebrews 2; Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3; Amos 8:9; Mark 15:16-47; Mark 16:1-8; Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Psalm 22

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Go ahead and grab your Bible and your notebook, and open up to Mark chapter 15. This is our last night looking at the Gospel according to Mark.

As you're turning there, let me tell you a story. This past Sunday, my wife and I got back from church. I decided not to nap because I wouldn't be nice that night, so I went on a power walk. I put on my wife's weighted vest, added 12 pounds to it, and went about five miles. Big strides, fast steps. It was gruesome.

I came back home, showered, sat on the couch, and turned on a movie. My wife and I were watching this suspenseful thriller. I mean, the scene was intense. It was that moment. My daughter runs in. She's two. She's terrified. We're watching this thriller. She's there. We don't mind. She runs up, jumps on the couch, and gets next to my wife. I'm looking at her face, and she's kind of grimacing a little bit because it's a scary moment in the scene.

We're watching it. We don't change it because we want to see what happens. It's that moment in the movie where, if you're on the edge of your seat, it's right there. Some of you are questioning my parenting. Just hold on a second.

My daughter's scared. I'm watching. My wife is holding her. It gets to the moment where the villain is about to kill the hero. The villain picks up his sword, and as he's about to swing down and kill the hero, Anna steps in front and stretches out her hand. The sword hits it. He falls back. Elsa is saved. They hug each other, but Anna's frozen. Elsa gives her a hug, and true love saves. In that moment, Anna melts. Kristoff gets his girl. Hans gets hit off the boat. Arendelle is good. The walls stay open. Frozen ends. The snowman talks. Everything's good.

Some of y'all really thought we were watching a horror movie with our two-year-old daughter, which we were not. It was suspenseful, though, the storm happening in Frozen.

Tonight, in the Gospel according to Mark, we are at our climax. Everything is leading up to this moment. I was looking at it today. This is sermon number 54 in the Gospel according to Mark, and God has done wondrous things through this study as we take just a step further in knowing who the person of Jesus Christ is and what that means for us today.

Every miracle, every teaching, every conflict, every healing, every demonic encounter we've seen, every breakthrough of the kingdom of God points to tonight. The greatest love story ever told. The kingdom of God takes a stand here, and the narrative of Scripture finds fulfillment and completion in what we're about to look

at tonight.

Here's the title as you're taking notes: "Just as He Told You," Mark 15:16 through Mark 16:8.

There's a lot of Scripture that we're going to cover tonight, and I'm going to do my very best to communicate it clearly. But without argument, this is the most important area of Scripture for our faith today. Because of this text, this hopeless, disastrous scene we see Jesus in right now will turn into a triumphant victory for Him and for all who call on Him.

This is what defines our faith as Christians and separates us from everyone else and everything else in this world. This is the victory we sing about. But before we get there, we have to start with the end.

The End

We're continuing in the Passion narrative, looking at what we now call Holy Week, the last week of Jesus's earthly life.

Just a quick recap so far: we've seen the triumphal entry, Jesus riding into Jerusalem. "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" A good reception for Him.

We've seen temple teachings where He has hard truths. We've looked at that for quite a while now, talking about the resurrection, signs of the end, and the return of Christ. We looked at the Passover meal, which is now the Lord's Supper. We saw the betrayal and the arrest of Jesus the Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. We looked at the trial, and we're continuing in it between Jesus, Pilate, and the Jewish religious leaders.

Tonight, we're going to pick up in Mark 15, starting in verse 16. The Bible says this:

> The soldiers led Him, being Jesus, away inside the palace, that is, the governor's headquarters. And they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed Him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on Him. And they began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking His head with a reed and spitting on Him and kneeling down in homage to Him. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the purple cloak and put His own clothes on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

There are a few things to point out here as we continue tonight. Three times Jesus has been making a prediction of what's coming in Jerusalem: Mark 8:31; Mark 9:30-32; and then in Mark 10, it gets the most vivid and descriptive it's been so far, which is the scene we see tonight.

The Bible says this. Jesus is walking with His disciples, and He says:

> See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man...

Underline that.

> ...will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes...

That's talking about His arrest and betrayal.

> They will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles...

That's talking about the sentencing and the Roman soldiers who now have Him.

> ...and they will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him.

And look at this:

> And after three days He will rise.

Verses 16 through 20 are the fulfillment of most of that prediction.

Remember, Jesus has already been beaten near to the point of death. Last week, Matthew Schultz preached it. They took Him and scourged Him. They got the Roman whip, and they beat Him on the back so severely that whole chunks of skin would pull off.

Right now, in this moment, if we were there, we would see Jesus's back naked and exposed. He would hardly look like a human being, with muscle tissue and bone out to the public. He's been beaten, mocked, and spit on.

Now He's taken to the Roman governor's quarters, and a battalion of about 600 men encircles Jesus. They begin beating Him, mocking Him, spitting on Him, and treating Him like the King of the Jews, making it so clear that if anyone tries to go against Rome, this is what will happen, because Rome is the power of this world.

And Jesus takes it all.

They clothe Him in purple, which signaled royalty, wealth, and power, mocking Him as King of the Jews. Then they take a crown of thorns. Don't think little ones. Think long thorns that would have pierced His head, with blood rushing down His face.

King of the Jews, mocked and beaten.

Let's talk about that crown of thorns for a second, because here's what I love about our God: His redemptive capability. The Romans did it out of mockery, but God Almighty allowed it to happen to fulfill quite a bit of powerful Scripture on display here.

When sin entered the world, a curse came. Adam and Eve are in the garden. Sin was both of their faults, and because of that, God appears to them in Genesis 3. You can go look at it. Starting in verse 15, He pronounces the gospel. He curses the serpent and says, "The offspring of this woman will crush your head; you'll bruise His heel." We're about to look at that.

Then He turns to the woman and the man and delivers an effect of sin on their lives and on our lives today. One of these things is that the ground Adam was given dominion over - the vegetation, the fruit, the garden - is now under the fall of sin. All of God's created world and order has been distorted by sin.

So God looks at Adam and says:

> Cursed is the ground because of you; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.

Now hold that thought.

Because the Lord our God is a just, righteous, and holy Judge, He cannot look away from sin, evil, and wrong. The guilty do not go unpunished. Because of that, He gave Israel a handful of laws to keep them living in right order with Him.

One of those was that if a man or a woman committed a crime punishable by death, they could be hung on a tree. If you're hung on a tree, you become a curse in the land.

Look with me at Deuteronomy 21:22-23:

> If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord Yahweh is giving you for an inheritance.

We have the curse of thorns, and we have the curse of being hung on a tree, all as a response to sin. If you're declared guilty of a crime worthy of death, that's your punishment.

Romans 6:23 says that the wages, the payment, of sin is death.

Look at what's happening here: Jesus, in a purple robe, wearing a crown of thorns, on a cursed tree.

Look at what Galatians 3 tells us:

> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."

These thorns are more than just Roman mockery. This is God saying, "The curse of sin is being put on My Son," and it's His royal inauguration.

We serve a King who humbled Himself to the point of death. His crowning moment had thorns and a wooden tree, and He was nailed to it unjustly for our justification.

When John the Baptist sees Jesus for the first time, he says this:

> Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

How did He do it? By becoming a curse for us.

With the crown of thorns and the cross right in front of Him, Jesus puts on display for you and me today what He's doing, what His Father is allowing to happen, and why He's allowing it to happen.

But here's what's beautiful about the redemption of God: that crown of thorns was exchanged. He no longer wears a crown of thorns. His crown, according to Hebrews 2, is glory:

> We see Him who for a little while, 33 years during His earthly life, was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He would taste death for everyone.

This moment of mockery was prophetic of our redemption. That is who we serve.

You cannot read that or hear that without understanding, comprehending, and striving toward the love that God has for you today, what Jesus endured and suffered for you. That's how much God loves you.

I want you to keep reading with me, and I want you to start looking at all of these eyewitnesses. I'll share why that's important when we get to the end. But look at these names. They're there for an important reason.

He's being led out to the cross:

> And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and he carried Jesus's cross. He helped Him. > > And they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull. And they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it. And they crucified Him and divided His garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. > > And it was the third hour...

That's 9:00 a.m.

> ...when they crucified Jesus. And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "The King of the Jews." > > And with Jesus they crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left. And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" > > So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked Him to one another, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." > > Those who were crucified with Him also reviled Him.

We won't stay here for too long because we've got good news coming, but I want you to see the fulfillment of prophecy here as Jesus, at 9:00 a.m., begins to hang on a cross.

Psalm 22 is now called the Psalm of the Cross. It was written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This Psalm of the Cross points forward to this moment we're reading right now, where Christ would step onto that cross, nailed by His wrists and His feet.

It says this:

> All who see Me mock Me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the Lord," they say. "Let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him."

It's exactly what Jesus is hearing and experiencing on the cross.

I want you to think about this for just a moment. Think about being a disciple of Jesus that day. You've been walking with the Rabbi for three years. You've seen Jesus do inexplicable miracles day after day: walking on water, calming the storm, raising the dead, healing the sick, driving out demons, and teaching with authority.

All of a sudden, in the span of two days, He's now hanging on a cross, dying the death of a criminal, being executed by Rome. The One you expected to bring hope, peace, and rescue to your life is now beaten beyond

resemblance of even being a human being.

You're standing by the cross, and you're watching your hope begin dying. The man who came to rescue and save you is helpless on a cross, being mocked by your own people.

Things feel dark, and they don't look good, because no one understood what was happening.

Psalm 22 continues by saying:

> I am poured out like water; all My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws; You lay Me in the dust of death. > > For dogs encompass Me; a company of evildoers encircles Me; they have pierced My hands and feet. I can count all My bones; they stare and gloat over Me; they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

Jesus is experiencing the Psalm of the Cross being fulfilled. Hundreds and hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented, it always pointed to the Christ.

It's 9:00 a.m. Bloody, beaten, mocked, and rejected, Jesus is placed on a cross. For the next six hours, He's nailed upright, held in position only through nails driven through His wrists and His feet into this wood.

For six hours, Jesus has to hold Himself up, these nails scraping through more tissue just to try to catch His breath because He's drowning in blood and fluid in His lungs. His mouth is so dry from asphyxiation, what scholarly study says was the leading cause of death in crucifixion, that His tongue is stuck to His mouth.

Yet He's still managing to speak, and what He speaks is so profound:

"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

"Today you will be with Me in paradise."

"Woman, look at your son. Son, look at your woman," commanding care and love in the family of Christ, among many other sayings.

He's speaking in excruciating, unimaginable, unjust pain for six hours.

Three nails: two through His wrists and one through both of His feet. But there's a fourth one above His head that proclaims the gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic, in Latin, the language of Rome, and in Greek, the language of the world:

"King of the Jews."

That's the gospel.

The charges against Him were not false or blasphemous. They were true. He is King of the Jews, and He's on display for the whole world to see, in every language at the time: "King of the Jews."

Keep reading with me, verse 33:

> When the sixth hour had come...

That is noon, three hours into the crucifixion.

> ...there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

That's 3:00 p.m.

Imagine this. The One you love, the One you've followed, the One you've given up everything for - your fishing business, your family, your relationship with your own people - is on a tree. At noon, the whole land, in broad daylight, becomes pitch-black, total darkness.

Here's what's amazing about our God, the Author of Scripture, all of it: there's red blood tracing from Genesis to Revelation in Jesus Christ. All of it points to Him.

Amos, a minor prophet in Israel long before Jesus, said this:

> "On that day," declares the Lord God, "I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts..."

Remember, this is Passover. This is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They're celebrating God leading them out of Egypt all those years ago. They're having a feast. It's a party.

> "I will turn your feasts into mourning. I will turn your songs into lamentation. I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head. I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day."

This won't be on the screen. I just want you to sit here and listen to this.

I'm going to take you back to Exodus, when God redeems Israel out of Egypt. Let me show you some of these similarities.

God raises up a deliverer named Moses. God sends Moses to an evil man named Pharaoh, who is oppressing the people of Israel. He says, "Tell Pharaoh, 'Let My people go.'"

Pharaoh says no again and again and again and again.

God says, "I'm going to send judgment on this land."

You can go do this in your own time this week, but with every plague, the ten plagues God sends on Egypt, He is confronting their false gods. God shows power over these false gods.

Before the tenth plague, there was the ninth one. It was a plague of utter darkness. God sent Moses to

tell Pharaoh, "If you don't let My people go, I will bring darkness over the whole land. You won't even be able to see your hand right in front of your face."

It happens.

The ninth plague of darkness leads right up to the tenth plague of the Passover. That's when God came to Moses and Aaron and said, "Okay, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to deliver you out of Egypt, and listen, this is how.

"What I want you guys to do is take a lamb without blemish, a perfect young lamb." He gave specific qualifications for it. "Bring it into your home, anoint it with oil, and keep it for four days.

"On that fourth day, that night, I will pronounce the Passover. What you will do is take that lamb and slaughter it. You will boil the meat, and you will eat it with haste. Get your shoes on. Get your bag ready, because I'm delivering you from slavery.

"Once you eat that meal, you're going to take blood from the lamb, and you're going to put it on the doorpost of your home. At midnight, when I send the angel of death, when I send My judgment on sin, I will pass over every home where I see blood. I will save you from death."

Now listen. The only thing that separated Israel and Egypt was blood on the doorpost. If the Israelites did not listen, the firstborn son or livestock would have been killed. The only distinguisher was the blood of the lamb.

When He saw the blood, He passed over.

They wake up that morning, and there's crying and weeping all over Egypt because the firstborn son, from Pharaoh to the least, is dead, and the firstborn of every livestock is dead. God delivers them out of Egypt.

That's what the Jews are celebrating.

God says, "I'm bringing a plague of darkness before I bring judgment on My only Son to deliver you from sin."

It's powerful to see God connect all of Scripture together in redemption. Jesus experienced our judgment day at Calvary.

I heard a preacher say this once: everyone's testimony has the same starting place, 2,000 years ago on a cross. It's only in the blood of Jesus that judgment and death still pass over you to this day.

Read with me, verse 34:

> At the ninth hour...

Six hours have passed by Jesus on the cross.

> ...He cries out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" > > And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, He's calling Elijah." And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. They put it on a reed and gave it to Him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." > > And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. > > And when the centurion, the Roman soldier who stood facing Jesus at the foot of the cross, saw that in this way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly, this man was the Son of God." > > And there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, which is Jesus's mom, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they followed Him and ministered to Jesus. And there were also many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Remember, these are eyewitnesses. That's very important. When this letter was being circulated around Rome, most of these people were still alive. What that means is that you could go ask them to validate this story.

Psalm 22, again, begins the Psalm of the Cross. David cries out in the Holy Spirit:

> My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

It's what Jesus cries out in that moment of total darkness.

Darkness during the day, by the way, represented God's displeasure toward sin and judgment. In total physical darkness, Jesus experiences, for the first time in all of eternity, spiritual darkness. The Father turns His face away from His eternal, beloved Son.

Jesus experiences the fullness of wrath. The physical beatings were nothing compared to the wrath of God on sin, and Jesus experiences all of it. That's when He cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Verse 38 says He breathed His last, and the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.

That veil was not just a tiny little curtain. In temple worship, that veil separated the people and the priests from the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God dwelt. What that veil signified was the barrier that existed between God and man.

One day a year, one man on one day a year, the high priest could go into that most holy place to offer sacrifice. If he was not clean, he would die on the spot. The presence of God is not something to be trifled with.

When Jesus utters His last breath, the temple veil tears from top to bottom.

Who do you think tore it?

God Almighty tore the veil.

What is He saying? "The way open to Me is now available. The barrier is gone for good. Sinful man can

come back into the presence of God because My Son did what you couldn't."

That's great news, amen?

All power, all glory. The King of creation tears the veil and opens Himself up to be known and seen through Christ. Jesus is the sacrifice that ends all sacrifices.

What the Cross Means for Us

I'm going to give you three things the cross of Jesus Christ means for us today through this text.

Number one, the cross of Jesus Christ proves that God loves me. Write that in the first person: "God loves me."

He loves you, and He understands what it is to suffer. Christianity is the only faith in which our God knows suffering and experienced it. He's not indifferent toward it. He doesn't neglect it. It means God loves you, and He understands what it is to suffer.

Secondly, the cross of Jesus Christ gives sinners access into the presence of God Almighty. Only through the cross of Jesus Christ can we be brought back into the presence of God. The cross of Jesus Christ is the only way the barrier of sin is removed for good so that man can be with God again.

Look at how powerful that is. The veil tears right there, top to bottom. All caps, red letters, God writes, "Redemption. Access granted through My Son."

Who is the first person to make the confession? A Roman soldier, a Gentile.

Where was he? He was at the foot of the cross.

You know what that means for us today? We won't know who Jesus is until we've been to the foot of the cross and looked upon our King, marred, beaten, and suffering on our behalf.

It's at the foot of the cross that joy begins for us. At the foot of the cross, there's life, because what was done for us still stands, and it still speaks.

Listen, I don't care how morally good you are. It is only through the blood of Jesus Christ that we get access to God again. I don't care how rough your past has been. It is only through the blood of Jesus Christ that we're restored.

This Roman soldier, this centurion, has seen numbers of deaths. He has fought in wars. He has climbed the ladder through loyalty to Rome. He's standing there, a man who had seen death countless times, but he has never seen a death like this.

He watches Jesus die with such grace, forgiveness, love, and power that his hard heart is melted. He confesses right there on the spot, which was blasphemous for a Roman. Only Caesar was hailed as the son of the most high Augustus.

He says, "No, no, no, no. Caesar is not the son of God. This man is the Son of God."

Verse 39:

> Truly, this man was the Son of God.

Here's what I love about the Scriptures. Mark's whole Gospel is to show us that Jesus is the Son of God.

Do you know the first place where Mark says Jesus is the Son of God? Mark 1:1:

> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It's what we've been looking at for 54 messages. Right now, at the crucifixion, at His last breath, it's realized by a Roman soldier who this is.

The rest of chapter 15 finishes with Joseph of Arimathea coming, a Pharisee who, watch this, was looking for the kingdom of God. He comes and asks Pilate, "Can I please have the body of Jesus so I can properly bury Him?"

Pilate says, "He's dead already?"

The Roman centurion comes and says, "Yeah, He's dead. I put my spear through Him. Blood and water rushed out. He's dead."

I'll tell you why that's so important here in a minute: He was legally declared dead, physically dead.

Joseph takes His body off the cross, wraps Him in a linen cloth, puts Him in a tomb, and it's sealed. The end of chapter 15 says that the women saw the tomb where He was laid.

Remember, these are all eyewitness accounts. People were right there in front of Him. Just like you could write an eyewitness account of tonight, they wrote one about Jesus. We're holding it, and it was validated.

That's the end.

The Beginning

Here's the beginning: Mark chapter 16.

This happens on Friday. Friday is Passover. The lamb is slaughtered.

According to Jewish regulation and law, you could do no work on the Sabbath, the next day, Saturday. You could not touch a dead body or you'd be unclean, excluded from the community. These women and men - the disciples, by the way, were hiding for their lives, terrorized by fear - had to wait a full day to come anoint the body of Jesus for burial, just to be customary.

All day Friday night and Saturday, they are mourning. They are grieving. Hope is gone.

Listen, no one expected the resurrection.

Scripture does not say - and listen, if they were making up a story, don't you think they would have been like, "Hey, just wait a minute. He said it. He's going to do it"?

No one's expecting the resurrection. Pilate's not. Caiaphas, the high priest, is not. The Sanhedrin's not. Peter's not. He's hiding for his life. These women aren't. They're going to anoint a dead body.

But God.

Chapter 16:

> When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint Him, being Jesus. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb...

This is the tomb they had seen with their own eyes.

But they had a problem. They're walking there, and they're saying, "Who's going to move this giant stone?"

The Gospel according to Matthew says that when Jesus was killed and put in the tomb, the high priest and Jewish leaders went to Pilate and said, "Hey, His disciples are going to try to pull a fast one on you. They're going to try to take His body so that they can continue teaching all of this stuff.

"Here's what you should do. You should put Roman soldiers in front of the tomb, and you should get a really large stone, thousands of pounds, and roll it over the tomb so they can't get to it."

Pilate, to appease them, does that.

Let me remind you: these three women are walking to a tomb that's sealed by a stone too heavy for them, with Roman guards too strong for them. They're saying, "How are we going to do this?"

But look at verse 4:

> And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large.

Look at the details.

> And entering the tomb...

They walked into it.

> ...they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

They see this angel from God.

> And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid Him."

I'm going to read that again:

> Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid Him...

Past tense.

> 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. > > 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.

Your Bible and my Bible have brackets beneath that, and it says, "Most early manuscripts do not include verses 9 through 20."

Here's why I'm not going to preach verses 9 through 20: the most accurate and earliest manuscripts do not include them.

Here's the reason I and most people think why. Mark's Gospel ends so abruptly. There's a resurrected King, and the women leave the tomb amazed, in awe, and terrified. What just happened?

You know what I love about that? It's an open-ended response.

What are you going to do with that news? What are you, Grove, going to do with the fact that the tomb is empty and the King is risen? What are you going to do with the fact that it happened just as He said it would?

What's your response? Because you have one.

Because people just couldn't figure out, "Why would you leave it right there?" there's an addendum to the narrative. Now, it's highly, highly unlikely that Mark wrote this because the language is different. Words are used that are nowhere else in the Gospel of Mark. He reintroduces Mary, whom he's already introduced three times.

People believe they wrote the end of the story to complete the narrative.

I believe Mark stopped it there because he was just as in awe as those women were that the King is alive. Look through the Gospel of Mark. It says they were amazed, there was awe, and they were terrified all throughout the Scripture.

It's an exciting story that Jesus is alive. It should produce awe and wonder for us today.

Verses 9 through 20 don't add anything new to the gospel. They also don't take anything away from the gospel. If you look at it, what does it show you? It shows what all the other Gospels do: there were many post-resurrection appearances. We'll get there in just a second.

It also says that there's a Great Commission given. We read it every week.

Verses 17 and 18, where it starts talking about snake handlers and drinking poison, that's not

prescriptive. You don't have to do that to be a Christian, okay? I'm not going to do that to show you. But look through the book of Acts. God brought protection on people.

But here is what's most important for an "I want to see it to believe it" generation. Remember, the chief priests said, "Come off that cross so we can see and believe."

Jesus stayed on that cross so that those who would believe would see.

Works of the Spirit don't prove you're a Christian. Fruit of the Spirit proves you're a Christian. From the fruit of the Spirit, there will be works of the Spirit. You don't work to show fruit. Fruit works for you.

It's not about handling snakes, drinking this, doing that, or raising people. No, no, no, no, no. Your life will be known as a Christian by the way you love and treat people. It is the fruit of the Spirit, the life of Christ in you, that bears witness.

Jesus did appear to Mary first. Oh my goodness, I love this.

You think your life is too far gone. You think your testimony is too nasty and dirty for God to get in business with. Can I tell you why you're so wrong?

The first person God appears to, the first evangelist, is a woman named Mary Magdalene. What it says is so telling: she used to be possessed by seven demons.

The first person our resurrected King shows Himself to is this woman who had quite the story.

You are not too far gone for God to redeem. If you feel that way, the enemy is lying to you. You think what you've done is too bad for God. The first one to confess Jesus was a Roman centurion.

It doesn't matter where you're from or what you've done. The ground at the cross is level. The blood of Jesus can cover and deliver you.

Look at the gospel story. You are no different. Your sin is not greater than God's love.

Verse 12 is the road to Emmaus, which Luke 24 covers. Verses 14 through 20 are the Great Commission, which every other Gospel covers.

But bottom line, here's what's most important. Timothy Keller said this:

> The truth of the resurrection is of supreme and eternal importance. It is the hinge upon which the story of the world pivots.

All of life, all of creation, all of humanity - past, present, and future - hinges on the resurrection. It is the most important event that has ever happened. It is the greatest demonstration of God's love, power, and justice.

Historical Evidence for the Resurrection

Here's what I want to do: I want to help you understand how to communicate the resurrection to

someone else, because part of our response as Christians is going and speaking about the resurrection.

Here are four positive historical arguments, physical evidences about the resurrection, one at a time.

1. The Empty Tomb and the Testimony of Women

That tomb was found empty.

This is the most contested of all four that we're going to look at because the specific tomb is not known. However, every Gospel narrative and every epistle following it preaches the resurrected Christ. That tomb is empty. He is not there. He is alive.

Secondly, there's the testimony of women. In the first century, it did you no good. You had zero credibility if you were writing based on the testimony of a woman. You would have been laughed at and dismissed.

If you're a Gospel writer, if you're a disciple of Jesus Christ wanting to start this world-changing movement, you would not rest it on the testimony of women. Only if it really happened would you put that detail in. Because it really happened, that detail is there for a purpose.

These women testify to the risen Jesus. They go and tell the disciples, and the disciples don't believe it. Jesus comes back after that and rebukes them for their unbelief because they didn't believe those who did see.

You would not put your life on the testimony of a woman unless it really happened. But they did. They had no gain from doing that. It made them look foolish. They didn't care. They weren't there to please man. They were there because they couldn't help but write about what they saw and experienced.

The empty tomb and the testimony of women.

2. The Transformation of the Disciples

If the resurrection didn't happen, they would have stayed hiding in a room. They would have just gone back to their normal lives.

But these cowardly, fearful men who, when Jesus appeared to them, were hiding with the door locked in an upper room for fear of their lives in Jerusalem, became world changers. They flipped everything upside down. They died for their faith, preaching a resurrected King in the same place where He was crucified.

You can't deny the transformation that occurred.

What would make a man who was in hiding live boldly in public? A resurrected Jesus.

They had nothing to gain by preaching what didn't happen. It cost them everything.

3. The Conversion of Paul and James

Paul, as you can read in the book of Acts starting in chapter 8, was a persecutor of the church. He was

putting men and women in prison. He was killing them because he was so zealous for the Jewish law.

What turns a hostile enemy toward Jesus into a faithful preacher, missionary, and church planter for Jesus?

A resurrected Jesus does that.

He takes public enemy number one and turns him into a humble servant for Christ. That doesn't happen unless there's a resurrection.

Paul had nothing to gain. He lost everything. But you know what? The beauty of the resurrected Jesus was worth it. Philippians 3 says it's all trash compared to Jesus.

James, the half brother of Jesus, didn't believe Jesus was the Christ during His earthly life. His mother and brothers thought He was crazy.

What makes someone who is so deep in doubt and skepticism become the leader of the Jerusalem church?

A risen Jesus does that.

4. The Early Creedal Tradition

A creed begins to take place and spread throughout the known world.

Remember, this was not as much of a written culture at that time as it was an oral, verbal, storytelling culture. It was expensive to own paper. It was expensive to write. It was hard to circulate things, so a lot of it was spread by word of mouth.

The earliest physical evidence we have for the resurrection comes from 1 Corinthians 15. Paul preaches this incredible resurrection argument about the validity of Christ being raised from the dead, starting in verse 3:

> I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...

Meaning it didn't start with Paul. Someone shared this with Paul, and he shared it with them.

> ...that Christ died for our sins...

The structure of this, by the way, is musically like a hymn. It was a creed the early church would have passed around, some scholars believe within months of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

For something to be historically valid and affirmed as truly happening, the gap between the event and the writing has to be tight. That window needs to be short for authenticity.

Within months, at the very most a year or two, this is known in the church:

> ...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, and that He appeared to Cephas, Peter, and then to the Twelve. > > Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time...

Look at this:

> ...most of whom are still alive.

What's Paul saying? "Go ask them. They've seen Jesus. Ask Peter. Ask the eleven. Ask the five hundred. Ask me. I have physically seen Jesus. I can tell you this is true."

> Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me.

The resurrection happened because lives were changed, because it was the energy that moved the church forward by the Holy Spirit.

Those are four positive, historically based evidences of the resurrection.

Our faith as Christians - listen, I struggled with this my whole life - is not this outer-space, mystical hope. Our faith as Christians is rooted in historical evidence of Jesus the Christ.

Responses to Skeptical Theories

Let me show you three leading skeptical counters to the resurrection of Jesus, because this is what you'll hear when you tell people.

1. The Hallucination Theory

This was developed in the 19th century, the 1800s. Eighteen hundred years later, someone has a new idea of what happened. There's a major hole right there.

Here's the hallucination theory: everyone who saw the risen Jesus was hallucinating.

Psychologically, it is not possible to have a group hallucination. What a horrible theory. Do you know how much faith it takes to say, "They all hallucinated it"?

That's a ton of faith.

2. The Stolen Body Theory

The disciples went and stole the dead body of Jesus, hid it somewhere, and buried it.

Why did they turn the world upside down preaching a resurrected Jesus? Why did they go to the cross, upside down like Peter, for a resurrected Jesus if they stole the body?

We're talking about hundreds of people saying, "Yep, we're in on this deceptive plan. That's a good idea. We'll do it. We'll die for this lie."

No one dies for a lie.

3. The Swoon Theory

The craziest of them all is the swoon theory.

Here's what this is. Again, in 1828, 1,828 years later, someone has a new idea of how to explain the resurrection.

The swoon theory says Jesus lost consciousness on the cross, so He didn't really die. He was unconscious. They took Him off the cross, thought He was dead, and put Him in a tomb. Because there was cool air in there, He revived.

Jesus, marred and beaten to the point of death, gets up out of the tomb, rolls the stone away, sneaks past the guards, goes on about His life, and remains in hiding.

Those are the best - listen to me - those are the best three theories to disprove the resurrection.

That is absolutely foolish.

Christian, your faith is rooted in historical evidence. Do you know what that means? We can walk out of these doors living on fire for Jesus because it happened. Because it's true. It's the Scriptures. It's life. It's our history. It's the future.

The best three things people can make up to say it didn't happen are that it was a group hallucination, that they stole the body, or that He was just unconscious.

Live on fire for Jesus because it happened.

Application

Closing quote, then three points of application.

Tim Keller's **The King's Cross** is a book about the Gospel of Mark. He preached all the way through it, and he says this.

Listen, this is for you, Christian. Don't put it up there yet.

This is for you, Christian, who are one foot in and one foot out. This is for you who've put your faith in Christ, been baptized, and go to church on Tuesdays and Sundays, but there's no fruit in your life.

I was there. Do you know why I was there? Because I didn't give thought to the resurrection's reality.

Listen, if I had an umbrella right here - I meant to bring one; I just forgot - that umbrella, that covering over your life as a Christian, must be the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything underneath it, all of your life, must reconcile to the resurrection.

If your life does not bear fruit, I love you enough to tell you that you need to check and see whether you know Jesus Christ.

If you're culturally a Christian because it's cool here, grow up. Stand firm in Jesus. Be bold. Live unashamed.

If you're not, if it's cultural, if it's what people do, if it's just how you grew up - "I've always been a Christian" - no.

When did you meet the resurrected Christ? When did you stand at the foot of the cross and see the One who truly is the Son of God?

If you haven't, there's your invitation.

Your life should be a testimony to the resurrected Jesus. If it's not, you don't believe it. If you believe it, but it's not true in your life, you don't care enough. That's flat-out wrong.

Here's what Keller says:

> To the extent that the future is real to you, it will change everything about how you live in the present. For example, why is it so hard to face suffering? Why is it so hard to face disability and disease? Why is it so hard to do the right thing if you know it's going to cost you money, reputation, maybe even your life? Why is it so hard to face your own death or the death of loved ones? > > Here's why: it's so hard because we think this broken world is the only world we're ever going to have.

You may have never said that, but your life attests to it.

> It's easy to feel as if this money is the only wealth we'll ever have, as if this body is the only body we'll ever have. But if Jesus has risen and is risen, then your future is so much more beautiful and so much more certain than this world.

What does that mean? Leave it all behind.

If Jesus is in fact resurrected, that changes everything. It's either worth everything, or it's worth nothing.

Because the physical evidence and the biblical evidence all affirm that He was alive, that He ministered, that He taught in the power of God, that He was put underground for three days and raised up in the power of God, your life should bear fruit to that, plain and simple.

It is that simple.

1. Put Your Faith in the Finished Work of Jesus Christ

If you're not a follower of Jesus, if you don't have a relationship with God through Christ, put your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness and redemption of your sins.

That's what this is all about.

You may have questions and things you need to figure out or work on. The greatest thing, the greatest decision, is for you to step forward by faith and receive forgiveness for your sins.

It's a real need in your life. It's the greatest need in your life. It's your starting place. It's the start of your life in Christ.

That's how you become a Christian. Just like this:

"God, I know I'm a sinner. I know I cannot fix or save myself. Please grant me the finished work of Jesus and save me. Please fill me with Your Spirit so I know what it means to follow You, so I know who You are. Give me spiritual eyes to see the resurrected Jesus, that I'd follow You for all my days. Forgive me of my sins. My life is Yours."

You're a Christian. That's what that means.

2. Live a Life That's Evidence of the Resurrection

Live a life that's evidence of the resurrection of Jesus.

That's not to say, "Hey, you don't have to share the gospel. Just live the gospel." No, do both.

Good works don't save. Nice people don't get to heaven without Jesus. Live it. Bear the fruit. But tell them why. Tell them how.

3. Share the Good News of the Resurrection with Everyone

Share the good news of the resurrection with everyone.

He is not just the King who died. He's the King who's alive.

Don't give a half gospel. Jesus died for your sins, but you know what? He's alive. Because He loves you, He can forgive you.

Fifty-four messages looking at the identity and the work of Jesus Christ all lead right here: a bloody cross and an empty tomb.

It's yours if you will take it.

All you have to do is respond to that nudge and prompting of the Holy Spirit, drawing you to Himself in Jesus. He will completely redeem and restore everything about your life if you will simply respond.