

**“Unending Life”**  
**Mark 15:33-16:8**

Life... Xmas Story... Read it.

Mark... no birth narrative.

**Luke 2:1-21 (text displayed)**

Comment... That’s how the story of Jesus, began. Now, listen to how it ends. It ends in this way...

**Mark 15:33-16:8 (text displayed)**

I want to cover the high points of the story, and then leave you with one overarching thought that ties the Christmas story with the resurrection story and will, I hope, breath life into your soul this Advent season.

33-41

At the beginning of chapter 15, we saw Jesus on trial before the Roman Governor Pilate, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, brutally mocked, beaten, scourged and crucified. His physical suffering could not compare to his emotional and spiritual suffering as he died alone on the cross, separated from his Heavenly Father as he bore the sin of the world. Jesus died our death so that we might live life through him.

Verse 39 summarizes the significance of his identity and his work on the cross. The Roman centurion, when he saw how he died, said: “Truly this man was the Son of God.” Echoing the very purpose, for which Mark wrote his Gospel, to tell the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

In verses 42-47, we come to the burial of Jesus.

- We know Jesus died at 3pm on Friday (15:34), on The Day of Preparation, the day before Sabbath (v. 42). Jewish law stipulated that anyone who died on a tree must be buried the same day (Deut. 21:22-23).
- That meant Jesus’ friends had 3-4 hours to receive permission from Pilate to take his body off the cross, gather burial supplies and lay Jesus to rest.
- Verse 43 tells us Joseph of Arimathea made it happen.
  - Mark tells us Joseph was “looking for the kingdom of God.” John 19:38 tells us explicitly that he was a follower of Jesus.
  - To ask for Jesus’ body took great courage, because most other members of “the [Sanhedrin] council,” would have wanted Jesus disgraced and thrown into a common grave for criminals.
- When Joseph made his request, Pilate was so surprised Jesus already died, that he confirmed called for the Roman centurion confirm Jesus’ death.
- Pilate’s permission allowed Joseph to use his vast resources to give Jesus a burial fit for a King.
  - We see this in the amount of spices used (John 19:39 tells us 75 pounds were used).
  - We also see this in his tomb, Joseph’s own tomb, cut out of a rock where Jesus was laid on a stone bench on the right side of the tomb (16:5).
  - The tomb was then sealed with a round stone that covered the entrance, likely only standing 3 feet high.
- But then in verse 47, Mark tells us two women were also there, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph, serving as key witnesses. They “saw where he was laid.”

T: Verse 1 of chapter 16 tells us why they were there.

As the story unfolds, don't miss three important truths about Mary Magdalene (always listed first and likely the leader among the women disciples), Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome.

#### They are faithful.

- Mark 15:41 tells us these three women followed Jesus and ministered to him in Galilee, during his ministry.
- Then, they followed him to his death (Mark 15:40).
- Now we see them honoring him with spices that he might have a proper burial.
- They are portrayed as the faithful disciples, not Peter, not James, not John, nor the rest of the Jesus' male disciples.

#### They are chosen.

- They are chosen by God to be the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus!
  - In verse 2, Mark tells us they went to the tomb "very early on the first day of the week." That's why we come together for worship on Sunday, not Saturday, the Jewish sabbath.
  - As they approach the tomb, verse 4 says: "And looking up (the drama builds!), the very large stone is already rolled back!
  - Then in verse 6, their ears are the first to hear the greatest message in all of human history! "Jesus has risen victorious over death!" But not only that...
- They are chosen by God to be the first messengers of that news! This leads us to third truth found in these women.

#### They are evidence.

- Some people believe the resurrection is a mythical story, fabricated by the early church to perpetuate the memory of their fallen leader, but that view ignores all of the evidence in the story and the rest of the NT.
- These women serve as one vital counterargument to that claim. Why? Sadly, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, their testimony would not have been allowed in court. In other words, they would not have been viewed as reliable witnesses.
  - Thankfully, women's equality has come a long way in our day, but we have a long way to go.
  - As pastors, we are so thankful for the vital role women play in our church (helping set the culture of prayer in our church, leading groups, leading teams, directing ministries and so much more), but we realize there are greater ways we can equip and empower the women of Redemption Hill, and we look forward to you helping us get there.
- The point for our consideration is this: if Mark was fabricating the story, he would not have inserted women as the first eyewitnesses and first messengers of the resurrection of Jesus.
- They serve as strong evidence for the historicity of Jesus' death, burial, and rising from the dead!

Before we look at the conversation between the women and the angel, I want you to notice how the story ends in verse 8: "And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

What's going on here? This feels like a crash landing to Mark's fast moving gospel.

There are a couple of things I need to point out.

1. The ending feels so abrupt that scholars actually debate if there could have been a longer ending that was lost. We will probably never be able to know this side of heaven. But...

2. What we can be confident about is the longer ending we have in most English translations (verses 9-20) was almost certainly not part of the original, as the earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not contain them.

So why the seemingly abrupt ending?

- It is abrupt unless you see the women's response as highlighting their amazement over the greatest moment in world history.
- It is abrupt if the final verse is the highpoint, but, the real highpoint is found in the angel's message in verses 6-7, which tell of the real hero of the story.

The main character in this story, like Marsha and I taught our kids Thursday night in our Advent Devotional (thank you Ann Voskamp), and every story in Scripture is JESUS!

T: Let's look back at verse 5.

The women respond to the angel in the same way we would if a glowing being was unexpectedly perched on top of these speakers over here.

They were "alarmed." They were surprised. They were overwhelmed!

This young man was an angel, as the other gospels make clear. Angels are real, spiritual beings who deliver messages for God and minister in the ways he commands. They are as real today as they were to Mary, Mary, and Salome.

Verse 6 captures his message. "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."

- "Jesus of Nazareth," - highlights his humble origin and prepares them for the upcoming word about Galilee.
- "who was crucified." - leaves no doubt about his death.
- "He has risen; he is not here." Some scholars point out how this phrase can be translated, "He has been raised," pointing to a "divine passive" tense that would give us the clue confirmed in other parts of the NT that Jesus was raised by the power of God (the Father, Spirit and his own power!!)
- "See the place where they laid him." Seeing the women completely disoriented and overwhelmed, the angel kindly meets them where they are. He essentially says, "I know you can't believe what I'm saying, but trust your senses. See, he's not where you saw him laid three days before!"

HA!! Expound// Develop///

Verse 7 points to their moment of commission. Let's work backwards.

- The angel tells them they will see Jesus again, "just as he told" them.
  - Once again, we see the fulfillment of Jesus words of prophecy. Not only did he tell them he would be crucified and rise again three days later in (8:31, 9:31; 10:34; cf. 9:9, 14:28 and 15:29)...
  - He also told them very specifically during the Last Supper, that they would "go ahead of [them] into Galilee." (In 14:28)
  - But why Galilee?
- Where did Jesus call these women and men to follow him? Galilee.
- Where did the majority of Jesus' ministry take place? Galilee.
- Where were the disciples trained and sent out for mission? Galilee.
- Where was the primary place of revelation, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Galilee.

- Then we should not be surprised that Jesus wants to meet them back on their “home turf” to give them the greatest assignment and privilege: “Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I’ve commanded you, and I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- What a great place (as Grant Osborne says) for “their failure to be turned to victory,” especially for Peter who is singled out by the angel.

In all of the details of the story, we must not miss the point of Mark’s message: Jesus is alive! The resurrection serves as his moment of vindication. The resurrection proves that every word he said was true, he the Christ, the Son of God! The resurrection delivers victory over our greatest enemies: sin, Satan, and death!

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus tells the world that our God is THE GOD OF LIFE!!

And through his resurrection Jesus offers us LIFE NOW and LIFE FOREVER!

**The Point: LIVE LIFE through the unending life of Christ.**

----

**Jesus is Life.**

**“In him was LIFE, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)**

**“I am the way, and the truth, and the LIFE.” (John 14:6)**

**“I am the resurrection and the LIFE.” (John 11:25)**

(See also John 6:33 & 6:35)

Life is found in Jesus, because he is LIFE. He is the SOURCE of LIFE. Our life is derived and dependent on his LIFE. Life is only found in him! And he came....

----

**Jesus came to bring us Life!**

**“I came that they may have LIFE and have it abundantly.” John 10:10**

**“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” (John 14:19)**

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

Not simply our existence (and a physical heartbeat), but the kind of existence Jesus intended for us in the beginning where our hearts beat in rhythm with the very heart of God!

Health is found in Jesus. Strength is found in Jesus. Enjoyment and delight are found in Jesus.

True LIFE! Life that is whole, complete, not lacking in anything good, beautiful or true. This is what Jesus came and lived and died and rose to bring us!

When you celebrate Christmas this season, here is your reason to celebrate. Every gift pales in comparison to this gift. Every relationship is a faint echo of this relationship. Every thrill of hope ultimately points us to this hope!!

Jesus came to bring us life, life to full, a life of perfect flourishing! Life with God now and forever!

-----

**Everyone who believes in Jesus receives Life!**

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

**“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)**

Do you believe this? Have you believed on Jesus? (See also John 8:12 & 5:24)

Because, please hear me today...

*The resurrection guarantees and delivers everything we celebrate in Christmas!*

**Christmas Promises**

**And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great JOY that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOR, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE among those with whom he is pleased! “(Luke 2:11-14)**

When Jesus arrived, hope arrived. When Jesus arrived, joy arrived.  
When Jesus arrived, salvation arrived. When Jesus arrived, peace arrived.

Why? Because hope and joy and salvation and peace are not found in the outworking of philosophical ideas or religious ritual, they are found in a person.

Jesus is hope. Jesus is joy. Jesus is our salvation, and Jesus is peace.

If you look elsewhere, you will never find it! So... let me ask you...

*Conclusion:*

Where do you need Jesus to breathe his life into you? Hope. Joy. Salvation. Peace.

Let him breathe his life into you!