

Mark

Chapter Sixteen

Introduction

On the morning of His resurrection, several women came to the tomb, hoping to anoint Jesus' body with spices. Spices were poured over a dead body to counteract the odor of decay, but mostly as a symbolic gesture of loving devotion.

There is a great deal of symbolic anointing in the Bible. Holy implements were anointed in order to symbolize their dedication to God. For example, the Old Testament Tabernacle and its implements were anointed with a specially prepared oil.¹ The priests were set apart by a symbolic anointing: Aaron had oil poured over his head after putting on the garments of the high priest.² The kings of Israel were anointed: When David was chosen as king Samuel poured oil over his head.³ The prophets were anointed: Elijah was told to anoint Elisha as his successor.⁴ Anointing can be found in the New Testament as well: Christians are encouraged by James to call for the Elders of the Church when they are sick that they might be anointed with oil.

Anointing is an outward, symbolic gesture that illustrates the inward, spiritual grace of God's presence and power. The oil poured *over* you is a symbol of God's presence and power being poured *into* you. Thus the Apostle Paul used the outward gesture of anointing to symbolize the inward grace of the gift of God's Holy Spirit, saying in Second Corinthians 1:21,

2 Corinthians 1:21 (NRSV) ...it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us,

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NRSV) by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

¹Exodus 30:26

²Leviticus 8:12

³1 Samuel 16:13

⁴1 Kings 19:16

With this background, you can discover a precious insight in Mark Sixteen. At the beginning of the chapter, believers come to the empty tomb to anoint Jesus; but, by the end of the chapter, believers go forth from the empty tomb having been anointed by Jesus!

As we look at the doctrine of the resurrection, we also want to learn the devotion of the empty tomb. In a spiritual sense, we can see ourselves coming to the empty tomb to anoint Jesus; and, in a very real spiritual sense, we can see ourselves going forth having been anointed by our Lord.

#1 Come To The Empty Tomb To Anoint Your Lord (16:1-14)

Mark 16:1 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

None of the Gospels record the events on the Sabbath Day between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. You are left to yourself to consider the sorrow, shame, and suffering of the disciples. In each of your lives there will be times of deep, individual sorrow, shame, and suffering. Christians can and should be of some comfort; but there is a depth in your heart that only you and the Lord can explore. In those dark valleys, know that the Son will rise.

Mark 16:2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

Mark 16:3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

These women had no hope in the resurrection of Jesus. They came to anoint His dead body, not to await the transformation of His body. I think we can still be like them sometimes. We know that Jesus is risen, but when we come together on the first day of the week, we have no expectation that He is going to work in our lives in some remarkable, powerful way. We should come in the expectation of Romans 8:11, where we read,

Romans 8:11 But [since] the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Beloved, come to the empty tomb on the Lord's Day expecting God to work in your heart, and expecting Him to use you in His work in the world!

Notice, too, that even though they were discouraged and despondent, the women nevertheless came to the tomb. Don't let your circumstances hinder you from coming to the Lord.

Mark 16:4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away; for it was very large.

Mark 16:5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

From the other Gospel accounts you learn that an angel had come earlier, rolling away the stone and dispersing the Roman guards assigned to secure the tomb. There were two angels in the tomb when the women arrived, but Mark only mentions the one who spoke to the women.

Mark 16:6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.

Atheists and antichrists have come up with several theories to explain away the empty tomb. One theory is that the women and later the disciples came to the wrong tomb. Mark said in 15:47 that "... Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid." The angel now identifies the tomb as the tomb of "Jesus of Nazareth."

Another theory is that Jesus didn't really rise from the dead in a body; only His Spirit "rose," and went to be with God. But the angel and the witnesses make it clear that there was no body in the tomb. Jesus rose in a glorified, physical body - and His resurrection is the foundation of your certain hope of resurrection in a glorified, physical body.

Mark 16:7 "But go, tell His disciples; and Peter; that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

It is precious of Mark to record that Jesus singled out Peter. When we last saw Peter, he was weeping at having denied His Lord

three times. The Lord wanted others to encourage Peter that he could and would be restored.

You ought to encourage one another towards restoration...

Mark 16:8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Mark 16:9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Mark 16:10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.

Mark 16:11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

Mark 16:12 After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.

Mark 16:13 And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

Mark 16:14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

The first people to disbelieve the resurrection were the believers! It is sometimes like that today. In your sorrow, shame, and suffering Christians come to you with the hope of Jesus' presence and power, but you reject it as insufficient for your need. In your case, you know that He is risen, but you can't see how His resurrection makes any difference. Yet it makes all the difference...

Since each Gospel writer omits certain details, I thought it might be helpful to give you a chronology of the resurrection of Jesus. On Sunday morning an angel rolled the stone away from the tomb just before sunrise.⁵ The women came to the tomb and found it empty.⁶ Mary Magdalene left to tell Peter and John.⁷ The other women, remaining at the tomb, saw two angels who told them Jesus had risen.⁸ Peter and John visited the tomb.⁹ Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and Jesus appeared to her alone in the garden.¹⁰ Jesus then appeared to the other women - Mary (the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna).¹¹ Jesus next appeared to Peter.¹²

⁵Matthew 28:2-4

⁶Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1

⁷John 20:1-2

⁸Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8

⁹Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10

¹⁰Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18

¹¹Matthew 28:8-10

¹²1 Corinthians 15:5

On Sunday afternoon, Jesus appeared to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus.¹³ On Sunday evening the two Emmaus road disciples returned to Jerusalem and told the other disciples they had seen Jesus.¹⁴ Jesus then appeared to the ten disciples in the Upper Room, Thomas being absent.¹⁵

The following Sunday, Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, Thomas being present.¹⁶ During the following thirty-two days, Jesus appeared to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee,¹⁷ to five hundred disciples at a mountain in Galilee,¹⁸ to His half-brother James,¹⁹ and again to His disciples.²⁰ Forty days after His resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives as His disciples watched.²¹

Looking back on the first Easter Sunday, you see the women coming to the empty tomb. They didn't believe it would be empty, but we won't fault them for their lack of faith. You see, we know that the tomb is empty, yet we often fail to exercise resurrection faith.

You still come each Sunday to the empty tomb, as you celebrate the resurrection each Lord's Day morning. In a spiritual sense, you can come to anoint Jesus. Take a look at the women to see how you can come to anoint Him.

You can come to anoint Jesus by presenting yourself a living sacrifice:

The women came to the empty tomb, and God used them. They simply presented themselves to God. God uses people who are there. The people God uses are the people who are gathered around the body of Christ on earth - the Church - who desire to minister to the body of Christ - the Church.

¹³Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32

¹⁴Luke 24:33-35

¹⁵Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25

¹⁶John 20:26-28

¹⁷John 21:1-14

¹⁸Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:6

¹⁹1 Corinthians 15:7

²⁰Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8

²¹Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12

Someone once said that God is not looking for *ability*, but for *availability*. Make yourself available to God by coming to the empty tomb to minister to His body of believers on earth.

You can come to anoint Jesus by the sacrifices you present to Him:

The women brought costly spices, bought out of their own substance at great sacrifice. And for what? To help a dead body smell better for a few days! Yet it wasn't a waste - it was worship!

You can bring sacrifices to God. Hebrews 13:15 encourages you to continually bring the sacrifice of praise to God. You are encouraged to offer your service to God as a sacrifice. And you are called upon to give out of your substance on the first day of the week a sacrifice to God:

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...

Make it your practice to come to the empty tomb and anoint your Lord, as you present yourself a living sacrifice, and by the sacrifices you present to Him.

#2 Go Forth From The Empty Tomb With Your Lord's Anointing (16:15-20)

Before we go on, let me address a difficulty. Some of you, in your Bibles, will notice that verses nine through twenty of Mark Sixteen are part of a scholarly dispute. Sincere, godly, Christ-honoring Bible scholars are unsure whether these verses were in the original manuscript written by Mark. Remember, we don't have the original writing of Mark. If we did, it would be worshipped instead of read! We rely on copies of the original writing, and in some of these copies, verses nine through twenty do not appear. The best scholarship includes these verses; and they are Scripturally sound in their teaching. I see no reason to exclude them and every reason to receive them.

Believers came to the empty tomb to anoint Jesus; now, in verses nine through twenty, believers go forth from the empty tomb

having been anointed by Jesus! The Lord commissions His disciples to go forth preaching the Gospel with the assurance of His presence and power - with the assurance of His anointing.

Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

The idea behind the word "Go" is "as you are going..." In other words, as you are going through your life, have as your goal the furthering of the preaching of the Good News that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and is alive forevermore.

Mark 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Baptism is the outward sign of the inward work of salvation. Just as Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead, so the believer signifies that he or she has died, was buried, and has been risen with Jesus by being immersed and then emerging from the waters of baptism. The emphasis is on *believing* - you believe, then you testify to it by baptism. Those who do not believe the Gospel will be condemned.

Jesus speaks of His anointing presence and power in your proclaiming of the Gospel:

Mark 16:17 "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:18 "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

These things did, in fact, accompany the disciples as they proclaimed the Gospel in the first century. As you read the Book of Acts, the only sign that you don't find recorded about the early believers is that of drinking something deadly; but you can see how easily God could have, and probably did, miraculously protect His disciples even from poisons.

We argue today over whether or not these signs still follow believers. The facts are that they do! They don't always follow you as you proclaim the Gospel; but then, they didn't always follow the first century believers, either. The Apostle Paul preached and the

miracle of healing often accompanied his preaching. But he himself, as well as his own son in the faith, Timothy, suffered from serious physical afflictions. Signs follow believers today just as they always have through the centuries - according to the sovereign decision of God.

"In My Name they will cast out demons..."

The devil is no less at work in the world than he was at the time of Christ. You have authority over Satan - authority over his strategies and, when necessary, his emissaries.

"...they will speak with new tongues..."

In the context of the Great Commission, this is probably not a reference to the gift of tongues. The emphasis here is going out into the world and proclaiming the Gospel to all men everywhere. To that end, God could, when necessary, give His disciples the supernatural ability to speak about Him to men in their own language - a known language that the believer had never learned. This is the phenomenon you see on the Day of Pentecost, when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance..." and "...everyone heard them speak in his own language." This reference to tongues is the missionary miracle of speaking a known human language you've never learned!

Later on in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul speaks of another gift of speaking in tongues. When he does, he is speaking of a different gift, for he says that,

1 Corinthians 14:2 ...he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

It might be a new idea to you, but the Bible distinguishes between the miracle of speaking in a known human language previously unknown to you, and the gift of speaking in a heavenly language that is unknown to all men, but known to God. Consider this important distinction: In Mark Sixteen, and in Acts Two, the disciples spoke in known human languages to men about God. In First Corinthians Fourteen you are told to speak to God in an unknown heavenly language that only He understands.

Beloved, tongues is a controversial subject. We believe in both a missionary miracle of tongues, and in the gift of tongues. Speaking of the charismatic gift of tongues, let me just say two things: Since it is a gift, it cannot be learned; and, since it is a gift, it is not given to every believer.

"...they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them..."

Don't try this at home! The sense of the words are, "if you are *compelled* to pick up serpents..." or "if you are *compelled* to drink poison..." then God is more than able to protect you.

"...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

God still gives gifts of healing to His body of believers on earth. He is sovereign as to who and how and when He heals; whatever He does, in your sickness or in your health, He does to bring glory to His Name.

The Old Testament story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will put signs into their proper perspective. When facing the fiery furnace for the sake of their testimony, because they refused to bow down to his idol, they said to King Nebuchadnezzar,

"...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."²²

Disciples in every generation confidently declare, "Our God is able, and He will deliver us...But if not, we will not waver."

Mark 16:19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Mark 16:20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Jesus sits in the seat of all authority. From His absolute authority you can be confident of His anointing. You can be confident of the inward, spiritual grace of His presence and power in your life.

²²Daniel 3:17-18

Go, and as you are going everywhere and anywhere, remember that your God is able, and that He can and He will confirm His word as He sees fit to do so.

Conclusion

Do you want to experience more of the anointing of Jesus Christ poured out into your life? Of course you do!

The secret to it is simple:

Make yourself available! That is all that the women in Mark Sixteen did; they made themselves available; they were there, desiring to minister to the Lord's body. They were being used by being there. That is all that the disciples did at the end of the chapter: they were there, desiring to minister. They were being used by being there.

Make *yourself* available to minister to the Lord's body on earth - to the Church. Be there when the Church meets. You'll find yourself being used by being there. You'll find yourself experiencing more and more of your Lord's presence and power - more and more of your Lord's anointing.

