

First Serve

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 16:1-8

Topic

Three women bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus
are the first to witness His victory over death

Title

"Victory is the Spice of Eternal Life"

Introduction

If I say, *"The Lord is risen,"* what do you say?

"He has risen indeed!"

We don't use it too much (if at all) in the West, but Eastern Christians have greeted one another with those words since very early in the history of the church.

There is no Christianity, and therefore no salvation, without the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. As the apostle Paul declares, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty" (First Corinthians 15:14).

We believe in the resurrection. The question we want to explore today is this: *Do we believe in the **power** of the resurrection of Jesus?*

In other words, *Does the resurrection make a difference in my daily life?*

It made a difference on the very first 'third day.' The believers first to the tomb were initially *apprehensive*. By the time they left the tomb, they were *amazed*.

Which word best describes you each day - apprehensive, or amazed?

I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Do You Daily Approach The Empty Tomb With A Sense Of Apprehension?, or #2 Do You Daily Approach The Empty Tomb With A Sense Of Amazement?

#1 Do You Daily Approach The Empty Tomb
With A Sense Of Apprehension?
(v1-3)

Jesus made loud and clear His plans to be crucified and to rise from the dead on the third day.

Especially during the last six months of His earthly life, Jesus emphasized the importance and the necessity of His upcoming crucifixion as well as the triumph of His resurrection.

Mat 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

He "began" to talk about this, meaning it became a constant topic in His teaching to His followers. You might say it was the main theme of His last six-months of instruction to them.

The followers of Jesus had seen Him raise the dead. Jesus also made the amazing claim that He had the authority to accomplish the resurrection Himself:

Joh 10:17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

Joh 10:18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Jesus was not misunderstood. Even nonbelievers knew what He predicted:

Mat 27:62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,

Mat 27:63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'

Mat 27:64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

The point I'm trying to make is that the followers of Jesus had ample teaching regarding His resurrection on the third day.

Keep that in mind as we see the first three to approach the tomb.

Mar 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.

We met these fine ladies in our last study, when they were at the Cross on Calvary as Jesus was crucified. They were last at the Cross, and first to the tomb. That, in itself, speaks of their great devotion to Jesus.

They "bought spices," to "anoint" the body of Jesus. Jesus' body had already been spiced by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. He had been washed, anointed with myrrh and aloes, then wrapped in a new linen shroud, according to the burial customs of the time.

There was no need for further spices or anointing. Wrapped as He was, it wouldn't be possible to anoint Jesus in any customary way.

Again we see the great devotion of these ladies. They were coming with more spices, and would waste them anointing the exterior surface of the shroud, to show their love for the Lord.

Jews were restricted to walking only what was called "a Sabbath Day's Journey." Forced to wait, these ladies set out just as soon as it was lawful to do so.

What's funny is that there was no real agreement on how far that was. The rabbi's kept lengthening it through the years.

That's one of the problems with those who insist you 'keep' the Sabbath. No one agrees on what it means. As soon as a rule is made, someone finds a way to change it, for their benefit.

Since we know what they are going to discover at the tomb, we can understand the reference to the Sabbath a little differently.

"When the Sabbath was past" is full of insight for us. It's a powerful statement letting us know that the old Jewish system, what we sometimes summarize by calling it "the Law," has been fulfilled. The keeping of Sabbaths, and the rest of the Law; the bringing of sacrifices; **all of that ended at the Cross**, and has been replaced by the power of Jesus' resurrection.

The apostle Paul would say,

Col 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

Col 2:17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Things like the Sabbath pointed to Jesus. Now that He has risen from the dead, we find our rest in Him, moment-by-moment and day-by-day.

"The Sabbath was past." Don't return to it, thinking you can somehow 'keep' a set of rules and rituals that are required for you to either attain, or to maintain, your salvation.

You are saved by grace, through faith in the risen Lord. It is not by works. The only work required is to believe in Jesus.

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

Today we would say "as soon as they could." I doubt they even slept the night before. Without clocks to tell them the exact time, they'd be gauging the exact moment "very early in the morning" that they could honestly say the Sabbath was over.

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

They had a major obstacle to overcome. A two-ton tombstone stood between them and Jesus. It would take several strong men to open it for them.

The moment they could, they set out to perform a service that didn't need to be done, against all odds that they could enter the tomb.

Have we seen devotion similar to this before in the Gospel of Mark? In chapter fourteen a woman broke an alabaster jar filled with costly spikenard so that she could anoint Jesus for His burial. It was, practically speaking, a total waste of resources.

But the Lord received it as an act of worship and, therefore, of infinite worth.

Was the devotion of these three ladies like that? Was it an act of worship and, therefore, of infinite worth?

Not really. The woman in chapter fourteen heard Jesus as He described His upcoming death. She believed His words, and acted accordingly. She anointed Him as if He was already dead, because she believed He would die just as He said.

The two Mary's and Salome were coming to anoint Jesus *as if He were dead*, when He had repeatedly made it clear that on the third day *He would be alive*.

These ladies had lots of instruction from Jesus about His death, burial, and resurrection. You might say it's all Jesus talked about towards the end.

They obviously had incredible love for Jesus.

They had faith to believe that somehow the stone would be rolled away.

But they were fully convinced that Jesus was dead and gone. They were coming to anoint what they believed was a corpse.

Let's be real. They should have brought lawn chairs, to sit outside the tomb to await Jesus' resurrection.

The Lord's teaching about His resurrection had no immediate effect on these ladies. They approached life as if He were dead.

I want to make a comparison to us.

It seems it is possible to be a Christian, and to believe Jesus rose on the third day, **but to not understand the power of His resurrection in your daily life**, thereby approaching life as if He were dead.

I get that from something Paul said in Colossians 3:1-2. Let me read it to you in a paraphrased version of the Bible called *The Message*:

Col 3:1 So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides.

Col 3:2 Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

Paul saw some believers as if they were "shuffling along" in their walk with the Lord. They were not acting as if there was a power available to them by which to live-out the Christian life.

Paul in another place expressed his own constant desire, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection..." (Philippians 3:10). It seems by his wording that I can "know" Jesus, believing He is risen, but *not* walk in the "power of His resurrection."

What is "the power of His resurrection?" Pastor Greg Laurie puts it this way:

... the resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life (see Romans 8:11). Certainly the Bible does not teach that we will be sinless in this physical body we now live in. On the other hand, we can *sin less*, not by our own abilities, but by the power of the Spirit.

Christ can make us altogether different kinds of people. We must believe that. "Old things have passed away... all things have become new" (Second Corinthians 5:17).

Another author wrote:

The resurrection is more than just an event that happened once in history. It's the source of the power you can experience in your own life, every day. The same resurrection power that brought Jesus from death to life is available to you, and if you tap into it, you'll see amazing transformation in your own life, too.

How do we appropriate all this power? The risen Lord lives in us by His Holy Spirit. As Billy Graham says, "His divinity inhabits my humanity."

You can live the Christian life not in your own strength, but in the strength of a risen Savior. You can plug into power every day, **by faith.**

Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Like the two Mary's and Salome, you can be wonderfully devoted to Jesus, bringing Him costly gifts as a token of your worship. But you can be shuffling along, defeated rather than victorious, because you are not appropriating by faith the power of His resurrection that is always immediately available to you.

Are you apprehensive most of the time, wondering how some giant stone that stands in your way is going to be overcome? Then receive the power of the resurrection that is yours by faith.

There are no steps. There cannot be any steps to appropriating the power of the resurrection *because you need it to take any step with the Lord in the first place.*

If I say, for example, "You must deny yourself, and then this resurrection power can be yours," the truth is that you need to tap into the power of the resurrection in order to deny yourself.

One reason we shuffle along is because we put the cart before the horse; or, in this case, we put the deed before the power to accomplish the deed. We establish rules to live by that we think are prerequisites to receiving the power of the resurrection, but those rules are really obstacles that keep us mired in self-effort.

There is nothing for you to do, except receive it by faith.

#2 Do You Daily Approach The Empty Tomb With A Sense Of Amazement?

(v4-8)

Looking for something to do in Los Angeles? Why not take a tour of Forrest Lawn Cemetery.

From their website:

Ride in climate-controlled comfort on the Forest Lawn Trolley as you hear about our historic and beautifully landscaped grounds on this two-hour tour led by one of our trained docents.

New for 2016 is the "Hail to the Chief Tour." First Lady Abigail Fillmore has agreed to come up from the "other side" and take you on a fascinating trolley tour of Forest Lawn that will highlight the people that had ties to the White House or have held high political positions locally.

Our tomb-visiting ladies are about to get a private tour of Jesus' tomb with a very talkative supernatural docent of their own.

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

First item on the third-day tomb-tour was the tombstone. It had been "rolled away."

First thoughts about it were, "How?," since it was described as being "very large."

Matthew's Gospel tells us an angel had rolled it away; but the ladies missed that.

The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out. In His many post-resurrection appearances, it's clear that Jesus can appear and disappear places at will. We like to say He can walk through walls, but we're not sure how He does it.

The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let us see in.

Mar 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.

He's an angel. Mark is telling us how he appeared to the ladies.

If you recall, in a previous study we said that Mark called this angel a "young man" so that we'd connect him with another 'young man' in an incident at the arrest of Jesus. I'd encourage you to review that study.

Under any circumstances, it would be alarming to enter a tomb and find someone hanging out in there. It was eerie.

Remember - they still fully expected to find the body of Jesus.

Mar 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.

Like a good docent in a tomb-tour, the angel gives the ladies all the pertinent data.

This was, in fact, the very tomb in which Jesus had been laid.

The angel calls the Lord "Jesus of Nazareth" because that is how the ladies were thinking about Him. They were seeking the Jesus who was from Nazareth, as if He were a mere man.

Had they received His teaching on the resurrection, they'd have come, without spices, to worship the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The angel reiterates that Jesus "was crucified." He gives his own verbal death certificate. Jesus was really, really dead when He was laid in the tomb.

But here it comes: "He is risen!" I wonder if the angel practiced how he would say it. Where would he put the emphasis? How loudly would he say it?

After all, these are arguably the most glorious words spoken in the history of the human race. Neil Armstrong's historic "one small step" comment pales in comparison.

"He is not here." Well, duh. Why state the obvious?

I don't know why, but it smacks of, "You just missed Him!" In fact, Mary would see Him in just a few minutes (but not in this Gospel record).

They were encouraged to "see the place where they laid Him." We know - again from other accounts - His shroud was still there, as was the garment that covered His face.

The angel was encouraging them to see for themselves; to look at the evidence.

The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. The Bible encourages you to see for yourself; to look at the evidence. There is no theory of man's that has ever been sufficient to counter the facts as they are presented in God's Word.

As Josh McDowell says, there is evidence for the resurrection that demands a verdict.

Mar 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."

They immediately received a mission. It smacks of the grace of God.

For one thing, they had completely missed the truth of the resurrection. They came seeking dead Jesus, not risen Jesus. That kind of dullness usually goes unrewarded by men. But it's just the thing God is looking for, to bring Him glory.

For another thing, they were women, and in that culture the testimony of women meant very little. Yet God chose as His first witnesses, women.

The Lord had promised His followers they'd meet-up after His resurrection in Galilee. He wanted them to know that meeting was still on His calendar.

A lot had happened, but the Lord was in charge of it all. His plan was unfolding exactly as it was, well, planned.

The two words, "and Peter," are incredible. The Lord was reaching-out to Peter, to let him know he was restored. Peter, who had denied the Lord three times, was still part of the plan.

It establishes that the resurrection guarantees us forgiveness and insures our fellowship with Jesus.

I can envision Peter asking, "Did he really say that? Are you sure? He actually used my name - Peter?" It would have washed over him as waves of joy.

I love that song, "He Knows My Name." Benny Hester, an early Christian rock performer, had a song in which he sang to Jesus, "though some know me well, still nobody knows me like You."

Jesus knows you and yet loves you. If that isn't at once terrifying and awesome, then you think too highly of yourself.

Mar 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.

They launch-out on their mission to tell the disciples, saying "nothing" to anyone else, with a reverential fear.

They "trembled and were amazed." We always downplay feelings as Christians. For example how many times have you heard that agape love is a choice, not a feeling?

If you've attended church, or listened to Bible studies, you've heard that a lot.

I understand that, and it's true; but it doesn't somehow cancel-out feelings.

God has feelings. He is a personal God with a mind, emotions, and a will of His own. To deny God's feelings is to deny that He possesses personality.

We could cite passages where the feelings of love, laughter, compassion, jealousy, anger, hate, and joy are attributed to God.

This isn't to say that our feelings and God's are the same. All of God's feelings are rooted in His holy nature and are always expressed sinlessly.

Since it is alright to have feelings, let me ask you this: Do you tremble before God?

"Wait a minute," you say; "I thought Jesus was my Friend, yet you say I must tremble in fear before Him?"

That isn't the kind of trembling I had in mind. More like the trembling you have when you're in love.

For tremble, substitute the word *twitterpated*.

(That's not something that happens to you on social media).

It means to be overcome by romantic feelings. It means to be smitten.

It was first used in the 1942 animated classic, *Bambi*.

Thumper: Why are they acting that way?

Friend Owl: Why, don't you know? They're twitterpated.

Flower, Bambi, Thumper: Twitterpated?

Friend Owl: Yes. Nearly everybody gets twitterpated in the springtime. For example: You're walking along, minding your own business. You're looking neither to the left, nor to the right, when all of a sudden you run smack into a pretty face. Woo-woo! You begin to get weak in the knees. Your head's in a whirl. And then you feel light as a feather, and before you know it, you're walking on air. And then you know what? You're knocked for a loop, and you completely lose your head!

Thumper: Gosh, that's awful.

You're to be twitterpated AND you're to be "amazed." That word means *ecstatic*.

Its understandable that you may have left your first love for Jesus. It happened to the Christians in Ephesus, who were attending a really great, Bible-teaching church, whose corporate and individual works were commendable.

It's understandable that you may have left your first love, but it's not OK. It's inexcusable. You and I should, spiritually speaking, still tremble with amazement at our resurrected Lord - Who is our heavenly Bridegroom. We should be ecstatic about salvation.

After all, the Lord is coming for us in the clouds. He'll be walking on air when He comes.

Shouldn't we be 'walking on air' waiting for Him?