

# GO AND TELL

## mark 16

We're finishing up Mark today. Taking the final chapter and seeing what we can see.

Mark chapter 16 is our text and it reads this way:

**Mark 16.1-20 - Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.**

**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. 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."**

**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.**

**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. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.**

**After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.**

**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. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 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."**

**So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.**

The Gospel of Mark is so interesting because you get so *much* interaction between Jesus and His disciples. And what we've tried to do with this chapter by chapter series is focus especially on the disciples and on those things that Jesus said to them and laid out for them. Because Jesus calls His disciples **TO** something. He calls us **TO** a life and a standard and a fullness that He then demonstrated on the pages of Scripture. And, looking at the disciples, we're able to

see where they either missed the mark or hit the mark and, hopefully, we've been able to apply some of these things to our lives so that we are as focused on God as possible and living out our lives as profitable servants.

This final chapter is no different. Effectively, it is the interaction of Jesus and His disciples. There's no real detail of the resurrection. There's not much detail of the ascension. It's as if those things are just the setting of Jesus having a back and forth with His disciples. So we want to see what He did, what *they* did and then what we should do.

We see different disciples having a variety of reactions to what was happening. Some believed, some didn't believe, some acted, some stayed seated. There's a whole spectrum of response among these believers. The same, of course, is true of our own lives from day to day.

But when we look at Jesus, we see Him busy as usual revealing Himself to His people. He made sure they knew He was alive. He made sure they understood what had happened. He made sure they heard what He was about to do and what their part to play was.

This is the kind of revelation God loves to give. You know, if we're not careful, we fall into the trap of thinking that God is too hard to really understand or God is so complicated and unfathomable that we just have to either experience a feeling or we have to get all intellectual and weird when it comes to our relationship with Him. But, like we're seeing in this text, the God of the Bible shows up and says, "Here I am. Here's what's going on. Here's what's going to happen. Here's what I want you to do." He reveals and then He specifically sends people to carry His revelation to others. He did it with Mary. He did it with the 2 disciples on the road.

Bible commentator H.A. Ironside points out that Jesus reveals Himself to us to such a degree that all our doubts are blown away. Once we've seen what Jesus has said in His word and what He has done in our lives and what He is doing all over the world, well then doubt becomes a choice. You get down to verses 15 through 18 of our text and you see that what God calls us to is belief. He calls us to faith and He presents it to us as a choice that we make based on His revelation and power. He is a God who explains to us who He is.

But His people are to then carry that explanation and deliver it to specific targets that God has sent them to. And this is pretty interesting. Because, Jesus spent about 40 days revealing Himself to different people at different times. But, as we see in our text, He waited to show Himself to the 11 apostles until after He had sent these messengers to them.

First, the angel sent the 3 women to tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus was risen and that they could meet with Him in Galilee.

Then, Jesus Himself sent Mary Magdalene to the disciples with the same message.

After that, Jesus appeared to 2 other disciples, probably Cleopas and his traveling companion on the road to Emmaus, who then went and shared a message with the disciples.

But each time, the disciples didn't believe.

Finally, Jesus appeared to them Himself, explained what was going on, rebuked the hardness of their hearts, and then laid out His plan for their future.

Now, we need to apply these things.

First, let's think about the 12. Well, really it was the 11 since Judas was gone and had hung himself.

They were full of unbelief and their hearts were hardened. That's what Jesus said. These were men who walked with Jesus and talked with Jesus. Peter and John had *seen* the empty tomb. Now, we've got to give these guys some slack. This was an unimaginable time to be a Christian. This time between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost. It was just rough. Plus, these guys hadn't yet received the Holy Spirit. So I'm not trying to dog them out. However, their response in this chapter is given to us as an example to line up against our own hearts. And we certainly can be a hard-hearted, unbelieving people.

We are generally conservative in just about every sense of the word. That's not a bad thing. We're also very well-off compared to the rest of the world. Again, not a bad thing in and of itself. God placed us in this time and in this place on purpose. We shouldn't be upset about that.

But those characteristics can push us toward a more unbelieving, hard-hearted mindset. We don't believe that all God wants for us is an emotional experience in our relationship with Him. Some of our brothers and sisters in Christ get very focused on emotional experience and they jettison God's word and the teaching of doctrine and those kinds of things. But, if we're not careful, we start jettisoning spiritual affection and emotion ourselves. We start sterilizing our Christianity and making it all academic. And we sometimes stop believing that God does *special* things in our lives and around the world. Some of our Christian friends do this. They don't believe in the Gifts of the Spirit or miracles anymore. They've reasoned their way out of those things. God becomes more like a professor than a Friend.

We have to live in this tension between extremes. But, even though we lean one way or another, we can't become hard-hearted or unbelieving. If a reputable brother in Christ comes and tells us that God performed a miracle, or if someone shares something with us that they think is from God and it's Biblical, it's wrong for us to just brush those people aside. That's what the apostles were doing and Jesus rebuked them for it. He told them to get on board. He has a power. He has a plan. And if we're always doubting all of that and all our fellow Christians, we're going to find ourselves seated at a table rather than carrying a message of hope to the world. God is a God of truth but He's also a God of radical transformation.

We need to filter everything against the Scriptures, we're commanded to do that in the Bible, but being Biblical and being hard-hearted are very different things. But sometimes we confuse the two. Sometimes we're fooling ourselves into thinking that we're being spiritual when in reality we're just doubting that God would do something special. We doubt the miraculous. We keep our thoughts on a human level of reason. What we need to remind ourselves of is that our God can make the sun stand still. And His power remains the same today as it was in the Scriptures. We'll get to that at the end.

But there's something else we see here, we've already mentioned it, and that's the *other* disciples in the text. The 3 women, then Mary Magdalene, the 2 disciples on the road. What you see in them and what you see Jesus detailing at the end of the passage is that His people

have a message to carry. God reveals Himself to us so that we can explain Him to others. And what I like about this is that, while God shows us that He has a plan to go to all the world with the Gospel, He also gives specific disciples specific people to share with. And that's our life. God has scattered you to this place because He has specific people in mind for you to evangelize and minister to.

And, He says that when we do that, He will go with us in power to confirm our lives and the mission He's put us on.

A big buzzword in Christianity today is 'missional.' We need to be 'missional.' And it's not a bad word or a bad idea. But everyone is using it and has their own spin on it.

I think I'd rather say that we need to understand that, if you're a Christian, you're on a mission. Right now. God already has places and moments and specific individuals in mind that you are to deliver His message to. And the Christian life is about carrying out that mission in the territory God has called us and seeing how God supernaturally prepares the way for you to carry out the mission He's put you on.

It's not always easy. It can be scary. Look at the 3 women at the top of the text. They were sent on a mission, but they left afraid and didn't tell their intended audience what had happened. That's not what we want to do, because that's not what we're asked to do.

Instead, what we want is to go where God shows us and be vocal about what He has done. Remember: This is the God who leads and reveals to those whose hearts are soft and shapable in His hands. And like Mary Magdalene or the 2 disciples on the road, God doesn't hold us responsible for the response of our targets. When Jesus came with a rebuke, He rebuked the 11, not the messengers. They did what they were supposed to do. They completed that mission.

Sometimes, when we're out there serving God, people don't go for it. They don't believe. That's not on us. That's not really our problem. If we're carrying the message that we've been given to the people we've been sent to, then the response is between them and God, who is also revealing Himself to them.

It's all explained very succinctly in Romans 10, verses 14 and 15:

**Romans 10.14-15a - How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?**

This is the plan of God. We've been sent so that others might believe. But for others to believe that God has saved them, we must first believe that God has sent us. And we have to get going. We can't spend our lives waiting because we're on a mission right now. And if we set out on these tasks God has given us, He not only goes before us in power to prepare the way, He also follows up behind us with power to confirm and demonstrate the truth of the Gospel. God is all about backing up what He says and what His representatives say when we're doing what we're supposed to be doing. He goes on record as saying, "I will show My strength, I will show My power, I will show My provisions if *YOU* are willing to be a vessel that is pliable in My hands."

That doesn't mean we're all going to perform miracles. Don't read this text and then go home and drink Drano. That's not what those verses mean. Those specific things Jesus said were an explanation of the *Apostolic* signs and wonders that we read about in the book of Acts. But the idea is the same for all disciples: That if we do what God has asked us to do, if we take up the message and carry it to the people God has sent us to, then God will confirm our lives and honor that service supernaturally and miraculously if need be. God says that the signs of His power will follow those who believe and carry His message of salvation. That's the deal.

But it starts with belief. Belief is the catalyst in this text. Belief gets you up from the table and out on the front lines where God is pouring out His power and gaining territory for His Kingdom. And that's not something we want to miss out on.

So, this morning, we need to remember the calling we've received. We're privileged to go out and preach the Gospel while the Lord works with us. And if we're staying tender-hearted, if we're staying full of faith, then we will see God confirming our steps, directing our lives and manifesting His power with incredible transformation.

He's given us the targets. Today, we're asked to take a shot.