

The Gospel Summary

Mark 16:9-20

On the corner of Park Row and Beekman Street, in New York City stood a man offering \$20 gold pieces for \$1 each. All day he kept up loudly announcing his wares, but of the thousands that passed him, most paid no attention and others either laughed or scowled at him. About 15 minutes before six o'clock, when he was about to quit, a woman timidly approached him and, after carefully investigating the gold piece, by biting it and testing its sound by throwing it on the pavement, she reluctantly paid the dollar and pocketed the golden double eagle. Ten minutes later, just as the man was about to go home, the woman reappeared accompanied by two friends and between them they purchased the rest of the man's stock, worth \$160, for \$8 in bills.

The next day and for several following mornings, the street was crowded for blocks with the same woman in the lead waiting for the vender of gold coins, but he never appeared again.

Some say Horace Greeley was responsible for the incident because he wanted to demonstrate his theory that most poverty is due to the fact that the general public refuses to believe even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Unbelief leads people into a spiritual poverty - Despite the eye witnesses accounts –the circumstantial evidence – the growth of Christianity -the changed lives –there are many who persist in unbelief.

Listen, we have something wonderful to offer today – greater than any gold pieces - eternal life. The whole reason for us studying the Gospel of Mark over these many weeks has simply been that you might believe. As we come to the last section of Mark, the key to this passage is the word "believe." That emphasis is in line with the thrust of Mark's gospel because this gospel does not present Christianity as just a nice story, a fascinating account of events that took place in the first century. It stresses the fact that the death and resurrection of Christ is something to be believed, and it is intended to change lives.

As I showed last week, some scholars doubt whether these verses actually belong to the gospel of Mark. It is true that the best of the Greek manuscripts do not contain these verses, but it is also true that the overwhelming majority of the Greek manuscripts that we have today do contain these verses. And some of the early church fathers, writing from the beginning of the second century, quote from this passage. So it is clear that, from the very beginning, the church has accepted these twelve verses as scripture, even though they may not have come from the hand of Mark.

This last section summarizes in brief order the events that occurred after Jesus' resurrection and it calls us not only to believe the Gospel, but to take the Gospel to the world.

If you want a simple division of the passage,

- The first verses, 9-14, deal with believing in the resurrection of Jesus;
- Verses 15 and 16 deal with spreading the gospel message; and
- The rest of the passage, Verses 16-20, deal with the confirmation of the message.

Follow along in your Bibles as I read Mark 16:9-20:

- 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.**
- 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.**
- 11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.**
- 12 After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.**
- 13 And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.**
- 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.**
- 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.**
- 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.**
- 17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;**
- 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."**
- 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.**
- 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.**

I. Evidence for the Believing the Resurrection (9-14)

A. Christ Appeared to Many Witnesses –

Mark 16 tells us that our Lord appeared to one witness, then to two witnesses, and lastly to eleven witnesses. Who were they?

1. He First Appeared to Mary Magdalene - V.9 says, "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."

To her was granted the privilege of being first to behold a risen Savior. You remember how the women had come to the tomb early in the morning, at the first light of dawn, and found the stone rolled away and saw the angel. The angel told them what had happened. "He is risen, as he said." But they did not see Jesus then. Mary Magdalene, according to John's account, was ahead of the others and, seeing the empty tomb, she ran to tell Peter and John immediately. Evidently she did not hear the angel's explanation. Peter and John both ran to the tomb. Peter went inside and saw the grave clothes lying there still wrapped as though they were around a body, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head was folded and placed aside. This convinced Peter and John that indeed Jesus was risen, but they still had not seen him. Mary Magdalene returned more slowly to the tomb and, John tells us, as she stood weeping in the garden and saw what she thought was the gardener, she asked him where they had laid the body of Jesus. He spoke her name and she knew it was Jesus; holding him by the feet, she worshipped him. This was the first appearance of the risen Lord to a disciple. He came first, as Mark tells us, to Mary Magdalene. She ran and told the other disciples. But

Mark tells us that when Mary told them that Jesus was alive and that she had actually seen him, they would not believe it.

2. He Appeared to the Two Disciples – In v.12 we read, “**After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.**”

Luke gives the full account of the two disciples who were walking some eleven miles to the little village of Emmaus. Jesus appeared in “**another form**,” Mark explains, and they did not know him. This was an extended conversation. As they walked along he began with Moses and the prophets and showed them all the things that referred to Messiah. But as they sat at table with him and saw his hands as he broke bread, they recognized their crucified Lord. Then he disappeared.

These two disciples came back to Jerusalem immediately and told the eleven what they had seen, but Verse 13 says the eleven did not believe them.

3. He Appeared to the Eleven Disciples – In v.14 we read, “**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.**”

It is evident that Mark wants us to understand what a climate of persistent and stubborn unbelief prevailed among these disciples after the resurrection. They found it difficult to accept this amazing fact, that the one they had seen crucified was now risen and living among them again.

The significant thing here is that Jesus himself expected the eleven to believe before they saw him. He wanted and expected them to believe the reports of the eyewitnesses who had seen him. Jesus rebukes them for their unbelief. He takes them to task because they refused to believe those who had seen him.

One thing is very clear from this account in Mark. When we have adequate, trustworthy witnesses who report to us what they have seen, we are expected to respond with belief. Even though we have not seen him, we believe because of the eyewitness accounts here.

B. The Resurrection Was Contrary to Expectation

In fact, the disciple’s initial disbelief becomes a reason for our belief. Since people, who were so unbelieving at first, were convinced at last, how strong is the proof that Christ indeed arose. The very doubts of the eleven apostles are the confirmation of our faith today. These apostles did not dream up a resurrection story, for they were among the last to expect that Jesus would rise from the dead. They believed rather reluctantly, and were only convinced after several reports, and after seeing Jesus alive from the dead with their own eyes!

Do you believe the Jesus rose from the dead? To deny it shows far greater credulity than to believe it. To deny it you must put credit in monstrous and ridiculous improbabilities. To believe it you have only to appeal to simple, undeniable facts.

So we have here the evidence for believing the gospel. Next we have the command to preach the gospel.

II. The Command to Preach the Gospel.

After rebuking the disciples for their unbelief, Jesus gives them a command in Verse 15, **“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”**

The command here is to **“preach the gospel.”** Like the parallel passage in Matthew 28, it should read like this: “As you go into all the world (that is taken for granted), preach the good news to the whole creation.” Our Lord takes it for granted that, as the church grows and develops, the good news will spread throughout all the world. While we are going, we are to preach, to tell the good news.

Now the gospel, the good news, clearly, is the death and resurrection of Jesus himself. Nothing can be clearer than that. Mark’s gospel emphasized above all else that Jesus died and rose again, **“the Son of Man came to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

That is the good news! For, in the death of Jesus you have the solution of the terrible problem of human evil, sin and all its consequences. The power of evil and sin is finally destroyed by the death of Jesus. And death is defeated by His resurrection.

Now that is the incredible good news of the gospel. The good news is that the power of evil and sin in your life and mine can be broken! It is broken by the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is the good news, and this is what we ought to be telling to the world.

That is what Scripture calls *salvation*. That is why Jesus said, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”**

Some have read Mark 16:15-16 and concluded that sinners must be baptized to be saved, but this misinterpretation disappears when you note that the emphasis is on believing. If a person does not believe, he is condemned, even if he has been baptized (see John 3:16-18, 36). Baptism is the fruit of true faith. That is really important is that you place your faith in Christ as Savior.

What Jesus means is that belief ought to be real, and the reality of that inward belief is demonstrated by the outward action of baptism. He is not saying that baptism is necessary to salvation, but that the person who is truly saved will be baptized. Only that belief that changes us and makes us act is real belief, and the way that we can demonstrate it is by being baptized. But that does not add to what the belief itself has already accomplished; it only demonstrates it. Baptism says in a beautiful symbol that you have died with Christ and have risen again to walk with Him in newness of life.

III. The Confidence in the Gospel.

We need to share the Gospel with confidence that it is true, for God has confirmed it. Knowing the pressure that would be brought against these apostles to get them to deny this supernatural event, our Lord now goes on to give them certain signs which will accompany and encourage them in preaching the gospel.

A. Signs that Accompany the Gospel.

Jesus knew well the enormous difficulties of the work which He had just commissioned them to do. He knew the mighty battle they would have to fight with heathenism, the world, and the devil. He therefore cheers them by telling them that miracles will help their work forward.

Here God was following a pattern He had previously established. When God sent Moses to challenge Pharaoh in Egypt, He gave him special miracles to perform as his divine credentials, proving that he was sent from God (Ex. 4:1-9). This was also true of some of the early prophets (1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 2:14-25). And so the apostles were also given special “signs” that authenticated and validated their message. They had a new message and great opposition, and God knew that they would need to give the people some proof that what they were preaching was truly the Word of God. And what Jesus predicted here certainly came to pass. Most of the signs listed here are recorded in the Book of Acts.

However, the age of miraculous signs was not meant to continue indefinitely. Heb. 2:4 and 2 Cor. 12:12 make it quite clear to me that there were signs and miracles that were unique to the apostolic age (cf. Acts 19:11-12). Some of the early church fathers, such as Chrysostom and Augustine, testified that these gifts ceased with the passing away of the apostolic age. It is only when plants are first planted that they need daily watering and support. Now that we have the Bible, which contains the written account of all these miracles, God no longer needs to confirm His message in such ways.

In our day, God is certainly continuing to work miracles, especially spiritual ones. A changed life is a wonderful miracle of God, and you have to be spiritually blind not to recognize it. And God occasionally does physical miracles like healing, but not for the purpose stated here. God is not going to coerce you to believe when He has already given you everything you need to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He expects us to come to Christ by faith, not by sight. The main point for us is that we can believe the message of the apostles with confidence, because God gave overwhelming confirmation of their message.

B. The Ascension of Christ.

Verse 19 says, **“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.”**

So the gospel of Mark closes with the Lord in heaven, but not just as the Lord up in heaven somewhere, aloof from those who follow Him, but as the living Lord in the midst of His church. In v.20 we read that when the disciples went out and preached, the Lord was “working with them” The word translated **“working with”** (sunergeo) literally means to share energy with someone. The disciples did not labor alone. By His Spirit Jesus was right there with them, working on their behalf. In Matthew’s account, He said, **“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

Oh, how they needed this power & assistance from the Lord. Now keep in mind, these were the men who were described as scared and unbelieving. And yet, Jesus is telling them to preach the gospel to the whole world. That would have never happened with any success unless Jesus had risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, and then filled these men with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus goes with His church directing its events, planning its strategy, carrying it unto the farthest reaches of the world. And the apostles, scattered throughout the known world of that day, preached this good news, their witness being confirmed by these great signs.

They laid the foundation of the great building that Paul calls the church, the body of Christ, that has grown through all the centuries since.

It is fitting that the Gospel of the Servant should end with this reference to work. The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20), so their work is finished and the apostolic signs have ceased. But the Lord is still working in and through His people to save a lost world. We ought to be serving the Lord and others like our Lord (Mark 10:45). Are you serving, or are you expecting others to serve you?

If you are saved, the Lord's Parting Words are a call for you to get busy for Him. The word is perishing and it is our duty to reach them with the Gospel. Are you doing that?

If you are lost, it is your duty to receive the Gospel? Would you like to do that today? If you will come to Him, he will save your soul!

If God has spoken to your heart on any level, you need to do what He would have you do today!