

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 5-7-17

May 7 we will study Mark 16:1-8. All adult classes will meet together in the auditorium
May 7. Cameron Bishop will be teaching the class.

Discussion questions are:

1. How would you describe the feelings of the 3 women in vs. 1 as they head toward the tomb of Jesus?
 - a. What kinds of conversations would likely have occurred during the day on Saturday?
2. Agree/disagree: “Our great American cities are, for the most part, vast, teeming pools of human misery, where people live out their days in a kind of ritual dance toward death, without hope. Despair grips people’s hearts everywhere. Hopelessness and meaninglessness press in on every side. Increasingly people seek asylum in the foggy world of drugs and alcohol. This generation is indeed Saturday’s children.”
3. Where do you see the most hopeless people in your world?
 - a. How is it we are to bring hope into the lives of the hopeless?
4. If Mark ends his gospel with verse 8, how does it leave the reader?
5. Why is it true that if the resurrection really happened, “this changes everything”?
6. What is the significance of Jesus meeting with people in Galilee? (It’s not Jerusalem, not primarily Jewish dominated.)
7. How do you understand the statement in Romans 4:25, “he was raised because of our justification.”?
8. Do you have a picture of Jesus waiting for you in Galilee – waiting for you to get your marching orders and go to work in His kingdom?
 - a. What do you think Jesus wants you to be busy doing in His kingdom?

Sermon: *The Rest of the Story*

Mark 16 begins with the darkest day in human history – that black Saturday when Jesus lay in the grave. But it ends with the women who had come to the tomb leaving filled with such joy and awe and exploding hope that they dared not breathe a word of it to anyone. When Mark says, “They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.” It is a mistake to hear him say “terrified.” The idea of the word “afraid” is closer to our word “ecstatic” than it is to “terrified”.

What a dreary Saturday that must have been. Their hopes dashed, their dreams demolished, struggling to make it through that dark Saturday with no hope for the future, no belief in the resurrection.

Are you aware that there are more human beings today who live in that same despair and hopelessness than live in anticipation of Resurrection morning? Someone has called our present generation “Saturday’s children” and it is an apt description. Our great American cities are, for the most part, vast, teeming pools of human misery, where people live out

their days in a kind of ritual dance toward death, without hope. Despair grips people's hearts everywhere. Hopelessness and meaninglessness press in on every side. Increasingly people seek asylum in the foggy world of drugs and alcohol. This generation is indeed "Saturday's children."

There are 2 versions for the end of Mark. One that ends at verse 8 and one that ends at verse 20. While it probably makes us all a bit uncomfortable, the fact is the most ancient and reliable manuscripts do not include verses 9-20. If indeed verse 8 is how Mark ended his story, what an ending it is! The reader is left wondering what is to become of these women who have just become Sunday's children? It will be Sunday's children who take the gospel around the Mediterranean, into the steppes of Russia, to Germany, to Spain and Ireland. It is Sunday's children who take it today to the tiny villages and great cities of the world. It is Sunday's children who form the greatest argument for the Resurrection. But you don't learn that from Mark's gospel. Mark leaves his readers wondering about the rest of the story.

There have been critical moments in the history of man that changed everything. Take for instance the discovery of fire. No longer will men hover in the cold and eat uncooked plants. This changes everything. Or the discovery that the world is round, not flat. This changes everything. Or the discovery that the earth revolves around the sun, not the sun around the earth. Suddenly the earth is just part of a bigger solar system. This changes everything. Or the discovery of the printing press. This changes everything. Or the discovery of electricity and the light bulb. This changes everything. Or the discovery of the automobile or the airplane or nuclear power or computers and the internet. This changes everything. On a personal level something can happen in your life that changes everything – a marriage, a birth, a death...this changes everything. For those women, those Saturday's children women, the empty tomb changed everything. Of no event in human history can it be more accurately said than of the resurrection - this changes everything.

Did you pick up on that little prepositional phrase used by that white-robed-wearing young man in the tomb? He said, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he said. (Mark 16:7)" Three distinct times (8:31; 9:31; 10:33) Jesus told his disciples he would die and be raised from the dead. And one bright Sunday morning He did just that – he arose from the dead!

Jesus made lots of claims and promises. He claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. He asserted that whoever loses his life for Jesus' sake and the gospel's shall save it. He promised that everything is possible for him who believes. He promised that there is "*...no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for his sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sister and mother and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.*" Twice he predicted, "*You will see the son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.*" Today we claim every one of his promises. Today we believe all of his

predictions. Today we trust him, depend on him, lean on him and take risks for him all because of the resurrection!

Suppose I promise to give you a million dollars Monday at noon and then a thousand dollars Tuesday at noon. You might have reason to doubt my promise – particularly if you could see my bank balance! But suppose I manage to fulfill the promise on Monday – you get the million dollars! What do you expect to happen on Tuesday? If I keep my million dollar promise, it's no step at all for you to believe I'll keep my thousand dollar promise.

Of all the promises Jesus made, the hardest one to keep is his resurrection from the dead. That's his million dollar promise and he kept it! And because he kept his million dollar promise his followers have little trouble believing his lesser promises.

Do you understand the significance of the resurrection for you life? The resurrection proclaims that the penalty Jesus paid for your sins was sufficient. Suppose God had placed all the sins of all believers for all time on Jesus but the payment was insufficient to cover all our sins. Could God have raised Him from the dead? No! Not without violating His justice! Jesus would have to continue suffering for our sins – He could not be raised. But since God did raise Him from the dead, He most certainly accepted the penalty as sufficient. The price is paid! We are free! That's what Paul meant when he wrote, "He was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." (Romans 4:25)

The resurrection also means that Jesus is not a distant memory of some good, righteous man. He is not a martyr for a cause whom we commemorate. He is alive! As Hebrews says, *"He always lives to make intercession for us."*

Mark is trying to get us to see that these women believed, though they did not see. Why do you believe what someone says? What makes you believe that what a person says is true? There are certain classes of persons whom we routinely do not believe, like Presidential candidates for example. We expect them to exaggerate their accomplishments. And, as for their promises, it's amazing how quickly after an election "unforeseen" circumstances arise that change the new President's mind.

Jesus claims without reservation, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." (Mark 13:31) He claims that His words will never fail. He claims that He speaks truth and that those truths will hold for all time. Do you believe him? This is perhaps the most important question you have to answer in you life: Are the words Jesus speaks true? The resurrection says, "Yes!" What do you say?

There is something you must see before we leave Mark. It's in verse 7, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee." Then with only one more verse, Mark ends his gospel. He ends it with Jesus waiting in Galilee for his followers to come. If all you know about the story is what Mark tells you, then you are left wondering, did they do it? Did they meet him in Galilee? In many ways the end of the gospel is still left hanging. Jesus waits

today...for you to join him. Some of you have joined him. Some of you have decided not to join him. And some of you sang some songs of the resurrection today or you did on Easter Sunday and then just go to lunch and return to the routine of your lives, largely unaffected by the news. You are neither filled with awe nor compelled to tell anyone about what you know.

If it bothers you that Mark ends his gospel in such an unfinished manner, why don't you finish the story. Why don't you meet Jesus today and become his witness in this community. That is what Mark has been trying to get you to do since the very first page of his gospel.