

**Mark 16: 1-18; “Faith or Fear on Resurrection Morning?”, A Devotional  
prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall and shared following  
the Easter Sunday Brunch on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

What a glorious morning it was when Christ arose from the dead. The sun was shining by the time Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb. They had come with spices to anoint His dead body. Evidently, they as well as Christ’s closest disciples, were not expecting Him to rise from the dead. For even though Jesus had said numerous times during His ministry that He was going to be taken by the chief priests and scribes, and crucified, He also had mentioned that He would rise from the dead on the third day. This was the third day, and yet there was not much expectation of things hoped for. There did not appear to be much faith in exercise; faith that Jesus would rise from the dead. The women came to anoint His body, not expecting to find out that He was alive. And yet God was merciful, and He took care to answer all of their concerns and their fears.

They were worried about the stone being in the way. The Lord took care that the angel would roll away the stone. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, it says in verse 5, clothed in a white robe and sitting on the right side. This was alarming to them. But he said to them – “Do not be alarmed.” “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified?” He is risen! He is not here. But I have instructions from Him. Go and tell His disciples and Peter, that He is going before them to Galilee. It is there that you will see Him. What tremendous news was given to these women! They trembled. They were amazed. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. How many times is it the same with you and me? We are given a promise in God’s word, and we may believe it in a general way, but when the time comes for its fulfillment in our life, and God does something great, we are amazed and tremble, and we are afraid of the implications of it!

Well, it says in verse 9 that Christ rose early on the first day of the week. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. This was a very appropriate thing for Christ to do, even though it might not appear so at first glance. You would think that He would appear to Peter and John and the other disciples first. They were His apostles. But see how the Lord rewards love to Himself. And Mary who was forgiven much, loved much. She who had had this great work done for her, by Christ’s casting out her demons, she wanted very much to honor Him still. She very much wanted to continue to minister to Him still, even though He was dead. In John’s gospel it says that when she saw the empty tomb with no body in it, she asked the gardener what had been done with His body. She wanted to care for it and bear it away herself to suitable place.

But when He revealed Himself to her that He was indeed alive; what wonderfully great news it was! And so she went and told those who had been with Him as they mourned and wept. Again, we find, there was no expectation of His rising from the dead among them. And to compound their unbelief, when Mary told them that He was alive, and that she had seen Him, they did not believe, it says, in verse 11. What was the problem here? I think that it was first of all, that their sadness and disappointment over all that had happened overwhelmed them. You might think perhaps, that they would not believe her since she was a woman. And yet we find in verse 13, that when Christ appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus, that they would believe them. But they did not believe them either.

Unbelief is often a stubborn sin. Proof by personal testimony was not lacking at all here, any yet they rejected the testimony of those whom they should have believed! So, later on then, Christ appeared to all eleven of them as they sat at the table, and He rebuked their unbelief and their hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him. They, no doubt, felt awful about this lapse into unbelief, but we should understand that when we are faithless

that Christ remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. He would not deny them or their need, for Him to encourage and build their faith at this time. And so He commissioned them at that very time, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Let us learn from this to not allow ourselves to fall into unbelief when very difficult situations come where it looks like all is lost for Christ's cause and kingdom advancing, when it seems that the witness of the Church to Christ has grown very dim, or even seems dead. Let us remember this incident, and engage Christ in faith, for He is risen, and will undertake His own cause to establish it, in good time. How blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.