

Hope Is Alive!

Exposition of Mark

By Nathan Swanson

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The Bible Church
35 Campus Drive
Port Washington, NY 11050

Website: www.thebiblechurch.us
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/thebiblechurchny

Please turn to Mark chapter 16 in the Word of God if you're not there. Mark chapter 16. Today we look at the final portion of this inspired text. From the beginning of the gospel according to Mark, Jesus was introduced to us as the Son of God. We were then watching him perform miracle after miracle throughout this text, and we eventually begin to hear him tell us that he's going to die, he's going to fulfill his plan, which involves rejection and death, to give his life as a ransom for many. Well, at the same time, consistently Jesus is warning his disciples of what is to come, they consistently fail to appreciate what Jesus is all about. And now, over the last few weeks, we've examined what are the darkest hours in all of human history. This is that time when Jesus has given his life as a ransom, and we left off last week with Jesus dead and buried. There had to be a no more difficult time in history to follow Christ than that time when Jesus was dead and in the tomb, but any reader paying attention to Jesus' predictions and paying attention in this gospel to this point, knows that the sun is about to rise. The sun is about to rise.

Let's stand, if you're able, for respect of the reading of the Word of God, and let's read our text, Mark 16, verses 1 through 8.

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. 5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" 8 They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

That's the reading of God's inerrant, infallible word. You may be seated.

Let's pray.

Almighty Father, we acknowledge You as our hope, and we are so thankful that You have spoken to us and given us the complete story of your Son and as we examine how this gospel ends, we ask that You would fill us by Your Holy Spirit with Your hope. I pray that, Lord, You would give us the ability to believe Your truth, let Your word go forth with conviction and power. This we ask in Jesus' name, Jesus, our living hope. Amen.

During the pandemic, I had picked up a part time job at FedEx, and I remember one of my colleagues once pushing back on my witness. In so many words, what he said was, "What makes Christianity different than any other world religion?" This was his attempt to marginalize my Christian beliefs but this is, if you like baseball, kind of like when somebody lobs the ball right over the plate, and in so many words, what I told him, my response was something like, "For one thing, what makes Christianity different from all other world religions, for one thing, all other world religion leaders are dead and buried. They were sinners. like you and me. Moses was a man like us. He lived and died. Even the Torah itself describes his unique death and burial. Buddha was a man like the rest of us. He lived and died. His sacred remains are said to be scattered in temples all around this world. Mohammad was a man like us. He lived and died. You can visit his tomb in Mecca. It's a world attraction. They're all dead. Every religious leader except for Jesus. Jesus is different. Jesus is different because you can go to Jerusalem today and there is an empty tomb. Jesus' body was gone three days later and his disciples believed they had seen him alive on several occasions and they were willing to die on that conviction. They died for the claim that they had seen Jesus. The world was subsequently transformed. Yes, Christianity is different because it is founded by a sinless man who was God come in flesh. That God who came in flesh, lived on this earth, died and lives again. Only Jesus Christ could say truthfully, 'I am the living One. I was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of death and hell,'" Revelation 1:18.

Now, that's why there's a church here today in Port Washington. That's why 2,000 years later, we are gathered here in this place on the first day of the week, because our hope is alive. The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. Our hope lives. But let's go back to about 2,000 years, where we left off last week. Sure, we saw glimpses of devotion, which a few souls showed to Jesus in his death, but the prospect of Jesus' disciples all going to the cross, taking up their crosses, and following Jesus is not just grim, it is hopeless. It's not going to happen. Only by some miracle could Jesus' disciples suddenly gain the faith and courage to go to the cross for their Lord. But they did. They did. History tells us that all of Jesus' disciples, all the apostles excepting for John, was martyred for their faith in Jesus and today's text explains why and how that is. So this is very important. Don't miss it. It is the only adequate explanation for the church's survival and expansion throughout the years, especially in its earliest years.

In this final report, we observe the Son of God that Mark has introduced to us from the very start, this Son of God, dead and buried, has risen, and because Jesus is alive, our hope is alive. Hope is alive because Jesus lives. And in this text, Mark closes his gospel

with three observations concerning hope, hope in Jesus' resurrection. The first observation we see from verses 1 through 3 is that this hope came unexpectedly. The fact that Mark has already plainly demonstrated that Jesus is the Son of God should sort of prep us for what is happening here. I mean, anybody, again, who's been following the study of Jesus throughout Mark's gospel is not really going to be surprised to hear that the tomb is empty. Jesus has risen. We should be anticipating Jesus' resurrection if we just accept what Mark has told us to this point. We've been paying attention to the predictions, Mark chapter 8 verse 31, Mark chapter 10 verse 34, and even in the upper room in Mark 14, 28, Jesus said, "I will live again," but these women coming to Jesus' tomb, they're not there yet and Mark invites you and I now to witness this hope of the resurrection through their eyes who were not expecting Jesus' resurrection.

Three facts from verses 1 through 3 indicate these women were not expecting Jesus' resurrection. First, they bought spices for anointing a corpse. Verse 1 says, "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him." Now the writer doesn't typically identify characters by name, but this is the third time he lists the names of these women, and the reason is obvious. He wants you to know that these were eyewitnesses. He is identifying these eyewitnesses so as to certify the reliability of his report.

Mark mentions three women. Matthew in his gospel mentions two. Luke names three women but describes there were more. And John only mentions one, Mary Magdalene. So some will look at the gospels and compare them and say, "Well, this is a contradiction," and we hear this every year from people, but if there were five women visiting Jesus' tomb, now this is basic logic, elementary logic, if there were five women visiting Jesus' tomb, then it's also true there were three women and two women and one woman there. That's not a contradiction. It'd be a contradiction if Mark had said there were only three women there, that's it, and there were more. That would be a contradiction. But Mark doesn't say that. We should only expect that four witnesses describing the same event would describe it in different ways. This is what we call complementary testimony. It's not contradictory, it's complementary, and the fact that it's complementary and not identical is actually proof of the gospel's authenticity.

So we're told when the Sabbath was over, these women come seeking to pay their last respects, as it were, to Jesus, and many Christians over the years have seen a great deal of irony in the statement, "the Sabbath was over." Commenting on this, the Puritan Matthew Henry explained, "Never was there such a Sabbath. Never were the Sabbath services in the temples such an abomination to God as they were now when the chief priests who presided in them had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this Sabbath is over and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world." Well said. We cannot overstate what sort of a monumental moment this is in history but one proof of how historic this moment is, is the fact that the Jews who will embrace Jesus as their Messiah will go on to worship on the first day of the week. Sunday will be their Lord's day and, of course, this is true. The Sabbath is over in more ways than one. The author of Hebrews will make the point that Christ is our rest and it is Christ who brings us into rest.

The spices these women bought here is the word aromata, which were aromatic spices used to offset the smell of decomposition. Here's what's interesting about that. We just mentioned from John's account in John 19 last week that Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of spices for embalming Jesus. Apparently these women didn't think that was enough, or perhaps they were eager to pay their own respects regardless of what Nicodemus had done. In any case, if they had listened to Jesus, they could have saved their money. They're buying these spices because they're expecting to anoint a corpse. But for them, they're expecting them to find that corpse in Jesus' tomb, they weren't expecting the resurrection. That's what that shows us.

Another fact which shows us these women were not expecting Jesus' resurrection is that they came to Jesus' tomb anticipating his bodily decay. Verse 2 says, "Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen." Now, given verse 1, we know these women are coming to Jesus' tomb at the first opportunity, following the Sabbath. Why? Are they eager to see if Jesus had risen? No. They weren't expecting Jesus to rise. They are eager to come to Jesus' tomb because they're anticipating his body will decay and that's why they're eager to come at first opportunity. Now remember, Mark has concluded the previous chapter in verse 47 by assuring us that these same women had made it a point to see where the Lord was laid. And this is why that's important, because some have come along and say, "Oh, you know, well, the woman got confused. They came to another tomb that was empty, and they thought it was Jesus and so that's how this whole story got going that Jesus had risen again." Unlikely. Mark tells us these women specifically watched to see, they wanted to see where Jesus was laid so that they might then, at first opportunity, after the Sabbath, render their service.

These women knew where Jesus' tomb was and, notice also, Mark says they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. Now, you know what that means. It was light out, okay? These women weren't mistaken about Jesus' tomb. They knew where they were going. They could see where they were going, but they were mistaken about something, they were mistaken about Jesus' power. They were anticipating his bodily decay, not his resurrection. They had no hope. Hope would take them unexpectedly.

A third fact which shows us these women were not anticipating Jesus' resurrection is that they worried over removing the massive stone that was blocking this entrance of the tomb. They're worrying about accessing Jesus' tomb. Verse 3, "They were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" Now expensive tombs at the time were sealed by round stones that could weigh up to two tons. These are stones, imagine a stone, round stone, six foot in diameter. This is massive. Mark tells us the stone was extremely large, verse 4. So these expensive tombs would also have this sort of channel into which the stone would fit, it would sit in that channel, and that meant it would be easier to roll into place over the mouth of the tomb than it would be to open the entrance. These ones are concerned. It would have taken some strength to move that stone into place over the mouth of the tomb, but it would take more strength to remove it out of that groove so we can understand their concern, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" I think we can relate to that, can't we? All of us in life come up against obstacles, against things and places and situations where we can't get around it

and we can't get through it, and we ask, "Who will move the stone?" It's a great question. Who will move the stone? Well, you know, there's only one answer to that question, as these women are about to find out.

Now, the women's anxiety over moving the stone suggests another problem, namely, where's the men? Where's the men of God? Where are those men that follow Jesus, at least the eleven of them? They're nowhere to be found apparently. The women's comments suggest that Jesus' eleven original disciples were perhaps too afraid, like John 20:19 would suggest. Or, perhaps they were too dismayed to render assistance. You see, Jesus' disciples were not expecting his resurrection and this fact, as embarrassing as it is to report, nonetheless reflects on the truthfulness of the gospel record. Do you see that? Jesus' resurrection wasn't a myth that his disciples invented, they came up with it. It was a fact that shocked them first.

This hope came unexpectedly but a second observation from verses 4 through 6 is that this hope came undeniably. These women were not expecting Jesus' resurrection, but three facts confirmed that his resurrection was a reality that neither they nor we today can deny. The first is that there was the fact of what they saw. Verse 4 says, "Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large." And the grammar from verse 3 suggests that these women were in the middle of discussing, "Who will move away the stone for us?" They're having this discussion. They were probably hoping that the gardeners would be present to help them; groundskeepers did work the grounds early in the morning before the sun had come up. And apparently these women were also unaware of the guard that Matthew tells us the Sanhedrin requested at Jesus' tomb. Do you remember that? Matthew tells us that the Sanhedrin knew Jesus had claimed he would rise again and so they went to Pilate and they requested a guard, an armed guard at Jesus' tomb. And we're also told they had his tomb sealed. Now that means this, they would stretch some kind of a band or a rope across the entrance of the tomb after they'd moved the stone into place, and then over this band, stretching across the stone door of the tomb, they would seal wax. It would be wax seals and that would do two things. First, it said to any passerby, "This tomb is off limits." This tomb is off limits, and it would say it's off limits by the authority of whoever is on the seal. So you don't mess with that. But also, it would reveal if anybody ever tampered with the tomb.

Had these women known this, they probably never would have come, we can imagine, but we can imagine these poor women then in the middle of discussing how they're going to move this massive stone, and when they are, Mark says, looking up in mid-sentence, they suddenly are left speechless because of what they see. The first thing they saw, he says, was the stone had been rolled away. Luke actually says that the stone was rolled away from the tomb. Interesting, which may suggest the stone wasn't just rolled away from the entrance, it was rolled away from the tomb itself, unnaturally. Whatever the case, that stone was moved and these women are concerned about what that could mean. They couldn't deny what they were seeing.

Verse 5, "Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed." The next thing they saw was a young man sitting dressed in

white, sitting in Jesus' tomb. The unexplained presence of this man dressed in white, the open tomb, the women's reaction, it all confirms that this was an angelic encounter. You know that if you study your Bible, many times angels appear on earth in the form of human beings. They are described in human form. So these women were amazed. They were amazed and the Greek word here describes inexpressible shock to something extraordinary. It's the same word, get this, that he's used of Jesus in the garden when Jesus began to be very distressed at the agonies that he was about to bear.

These women were amazed, they were in shock, but verse 6 says, "And he," the angel, "said to them, 'Do not be amazed,'" and what does he go on to show them? He says, "behold, here is the place where they laid Him." They were seeing the very place where Jesus was laid. They were looking at the very place that on Friday Jesus' body was lying. They saw it there, only now it's gone. In keeping with his concise style, Mark spares the details, but John mentions the linen wrappings lying there and the face cloth rolled up in a place by itself. Obviously, this was not the work of grave-robbers, because no thief would go through the trouble of unwinding the body and then would carry it off and leave behind the grave clothes.

Something extremely unusual is happening here, and this is what they saw. They could not deny what they saw, but also there was the fact of what they heard. The angel, verse 6, said to them, "Do not be amazed." That's noteworthy. The angel addresses their fear. This is no apparition. It's like he's saying, Uh, no, you're not dreaming and you shouldn't think you are. You should know what's happening here." Verse 6, the angel said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified." The angel addresses their expectations. He calls them back to reality. He's helping them to remember, to recall themselves. "Oh yes," he acknowledges, "I know why you're here. You're looking for Jesus, aren't you? You're not going to find Him here. He's gone." The angel explains everything then, the moved stone, his presence, the grave clothes, the empty tomb. He explains it all with this statement, "He has risen. He has risen!" He says, "Here, He's not here, behold, here is the place where they laid Him."

The resurrection was undeniable because of what these women saw and heard but, of course, how can we really say that? I mean, why should we believe the testimony of these women? And many will say, "Well, that's just hearsay." Some will object, "This is just unreliable hearsay." Actually, in ancient times, the testimony of women was generally considered unreliable. There's an ancient Jewish proverb that said the words of the law should be burned rather than entrusted to women. Josephus records a familiar Jewish tradition, "From women, let not evidence be accepted because of the levity and temerity of their sex." As twisted and misogynistic as we know that is, this was the world of the first century. It was misogynistic. It was patriarchal and women were viewed as unreliable; they were looked down on and distrusted. And so given the fact that women were generally considered unreliable witnesses, it's absurd to think that Mark and all four gospel writers would have invented the story of Jesus' resurrection in the mouth of women. But obviously, Mark is not writing a story for how it will be perceived. He's not creating a story to make it plausible. He is endeavoring to give us a factual one. He's giving us a factual report. This is called criterion of embarrassment, that Jesus'

resurrection comes to us first from the mouths of women. Oh, and yes, one of them was formerly a demon-possessed woman. The gospels are full of these embarrassing details, but that argues for the gospel's authenticity.

Now, others will object, "Well, this could have been a hallucination, you know. I mean, after all, these women have been going through a lot. They're hallucinating." But remember, there were several witnesses present on this occasion and they were all seeing and hearing the same thing. You know, if you have a dream and you're like, "That was so real," and I'm like, "Oh yeah, that happened," and then somebody else is like, "Yeah, that happened," pretty soon I'm going to be like, "Maybe that wasn't a dream, that really happened." These women are there. This wasn't a hallucination because hallucinations don't happen among people collectively and simultaneously. As strange as this was, the fact that there were several women all simultaneously witnessing, hearing, seeing the same thing is called criterion of multiple attestation. It happened.

What they saw, what they heard, given the fact that there were several of them undeniably confirmed Jesus' resurrection, but having collectively and simultaneously seen and heard the things they did, these women could not deny Jesus' resurrection for a more ultimate reason. There was something even more compelling than what they had seen or heard and for this we must reach into verse 7, where the angel tells the woman, "you will see Jesus just as He told you." Just as he told you. There was the fact that Jesus himself had previously told them he would rise again. That is significant. That is a fact that does not get enough attention in these dialogues and discussions about did Jesus rise again or not. We're not talking about just any claim for just anybody to be walking around, have come back from the dead. I think we all understand that this doesn't just happen. People don't walk out of the tombs. But there's something you have to know about Jesus. Oh yes, he claimed to be the Son of God. Oh yes, he was a miracle worker, which even his enemies couldn't deny. And oh yes, he made claims several times that he would rise again three days later, which neither his enemies would deny, which is why they wanted his tomb guarded. Yes, it would be very strange to believe somebody who just told you they heard and saw of someone risen from the dead, but don't forget the man in question. We're not talking about just anybody. This is Jesus of Nazareth. This is the Son of God. He's the one who predicted his own resurrection so how could these women then deny what they were seeing and hearing was the resurrection of Christ?

This hope was undeniable, this hope comes to us undeniably, but a more practical question to you, if you're a Christian, if you placed your faith in Christ, is this: how can we who claim to believe this, cease to be amazed? Now maybe you love apologetics. I love apologetics. Maybe you're excited to engage people. My fear is that we are so familiar with Jesus' resurrection, that we lose our wonder and our awe; the resurrection of Christ, which ought to shake us and move us, no longer has a real impact on our lives. But Mark wants us as his readers to also tremble in fear and amazement, knowing that this resurrection proves Jesus truly is the Almighty Son of God. This is and has to be one of the most incredible moments of history.

While these women did not expect Jesus' resurrection, they could not deny it either. This hope came unexpectedly, it came undeniably, but a third and final observation from verses 7 and 8 is that this hope, this hope calls unreservedly, or better put, this hope calls for our unreserved response. Verse 7, the angel says, "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee.'" The messenger commissions these women to carry a message. Why? Why are they to carry this message? And what's the rush? Well, because Jesus has risen and that fact changes everything. For starters, this message confirms three earth-shattering realities for Jesus' disciples and Peter. First, this message proves Jesus' identity. The resurrection is the ultimate proof of Jesus' authority. Do you remember from John chapter 2, when Jesus was cleansing the temple, he's casting out the moneychangers, and the religious scribes and elders demanded to know of him, "By what authority do you do these things?" And Jesus' response was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up." Now, they didn't understand what he was talking about, but John tells us, "This He spoke of the temple of His body," which he would raise three days after his death.

Jesus predicted his own resurrection, and that resurrection was the ultimate stamp of his authority. Romans 1:4 would say Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. There was no greater and later a statement of Jesus' authority and the approval that his Father had on him than his resurrection. And, along with that, we could say the resurrection is sure proof that the Father accepts the Son's atonement. Man, your faith better be in Jesus Christ this morning. It better not be in your works. It better not be in your religion or anything else. It better be in Jesus because God has proved he's pleased with Jesus. He has accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and he's made that evident by raising him from the dead.

And notice how the angel explains this message. He says, "Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee, and there you will see Him, just as He told you." We have to remember back to Mark 14:28 where in the upper room Jesus told his disciples, "After I have been raised," after I have been raised, he's told them, "I'm going to die. After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Jesus said that and now his disciples are being told, it's just like Jesus said. Everything Jesus said has come to pass. Remember, Jesus has told his disciples, "You're all going to forsake and reject Me. You're all going to flee in the hour of temptation. I'm going to go to the cross. I'm going to die." It all happened. And he also says, "I will rise again and I will go ahead of you to Galilee." This proves Jesus' identity as the trustworthy Son of God.

We can trust Jesus because of who he is but secondly, this message promises Jesus' acceptance. Don't forget that in Mark 14, all of these guys, every single one of them, forsook Jesus and fled. Maybe you're wondering why did Jesus single out Peter here? "Go and tell the disciples and Peter," why was that necessary? Do you remember how vehemently Peter denied Jesus three times and Jesus and Peter make eye contact. This is amazing. Peter remembers the words of the Lord. He is broken. Well, Jesus isn't singling out Peter then, he's including him. He's including Peter. When the angel says, "Tell His disciples and Peter," this was a token of Jesus' mercy. This was proof of Jesus' acceptance. This was Jesus saying, "I receive deniers. I receive those who have rejected

Me." Jesus is gathering his people. It's a promise of his acceptance. How fitting then that this gospel concludes on this note, because this, as we've already seen, is Peter's testimony to Mark. This gospel is Peter's testimony dictated through the pen of John Mark. How neat that Mark concludes here with this mention about Peter being received. The angel says, verse 7, "go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him.'"

Thirdly, this message provides Jesus' marching orders. Jesus is a king. Jesus is, the Bible says, the captain of our salvation. And now that Jesus has risen, he is calling his disciples to form up. "Form up. Get moving." The implication is, "There is a mission for you to accomplish. There is work to be done. What are you doing? Let's get busy. Let's get to work. Jesus is not done with you. Jesus has a mission for you." That's what this message means, and it provides Jesus' first marching orders. So can you see how and why it is that this message was so important? Why it had to be carried? It's a message which must be told. I'm reminded of the legend behind the first marathon. The embellished version recounts that after the Greeks defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, they saw the Persians sailing away in their fleet and they feared that they were going to go around the coast to Athens and that the Persians might somehow trick the Athenians into believing that the Greek army had been decimated at Marathon and thus would surrender the city to the Persians. So, fearing this, they dispatched a runner 26 or so miles to Athens, and the story is that when the runner finally entered the city, he cried, "Hail, we are victorious!" And then collapsed, dead of exhaustion. "Nikke, victory, we are victorious!"

That's our message. We've got a message of a victory only it is a far, far greater victory than any other triumph in this world. Ours is a message of the most incredible victory, a message that others must hear, and so our knowledge of this message calls for our unreserved response. To every Christian God is calling you, "Rise. Go forth from the tomb. Tell others of this Messiah. Tell others of the gospel of hope." What gospel of hope? Well, there's only one. It's a story that Jesus has come. He lived the life that we could not. He died the death we deserved. And he's risen. He's triumphed. And he is offering salvation to all who will believe.

This Jesus is alive and we must tell it, but now maybe you're on the other side of this, maybe you're surrounded by difficulties, maybe your faith is laid siege right now and you're surrounded by doubts and you feel like you may not last the night, but brother or sister, what you need to realize is that hope is alive. Hope is alive in Jesus. Jesus said, "Because I live, you will live also." Jesus' triumph is our triumph if we believe and hope in him. Maybe you need some hope in your marriage, and you feel that your marriage is dead. Maybe you look at your child, your relationship with your child, and say, "My child is dead to me. They're dead to God." But here's the good news, we know one who raises the dead and the one who breathes life into dead sinners. The one who rose from the tomb, he's the one who could give hope into your marriage. He's the one who could give hope into your relationship with your erring child. He's the one who can help you in your struggle with sin. Maybe someone here is saying you feel like you just have to give up. You've battled so long with a certain sin, you're beginning to feel there is no hope. But

brothers and sisters, the message that comes from the tomb is this morning that hope is alive because Jesus is alive. And because he lives, you can live. And because he has victory, he's offering it to you, if you will embrace him.

Well, verse 8. How will these women respond, being commissioned with this message? Verse 8, "They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The women leave in shock and awe. That reaction might strike us as odd. And they were terrified. Apparently, they had no category for understanding or processing what they were witnessing here. We can hardly blame them, but instead of immediately obeying the angelic message, then Mark tells us they fled the tomb and he describes how that they were so overwhelmed by fear and this is the final thing we see in Mark's gospel. We've seen already a pattern of fear and it's not a good thing. It's always inhibiting the disciples. Instead of responding in faith, they respond in fear. They're afraid when they see Jesus' power over nature. They're afraid at different times to ask Jesus a question. They're afraid in the garden and ultimately forsake Jesus. And now, once again, we see Mark concludes with a note of fear. The disciples are trembling in fear instead of faith and that's how his gospel ends with the women in fear and amazement, and with the most obvious question left hanging. What's the question? What will they do? What will they do with the message, this amazing message of the amazing Christ?

Now it's obvious that the reader, to the reader, that the women did nonetheless share this. Apparently they did. It's the only explanation for how this gospel came down to us. Mark's original readers in Rome would have understood. The women eventually shared the message because that's how they received the gospel of hope. But do you see Mark's point? This is a sermon. This is a sermon for the church of God. You have a responsibility, this gospel is saying. You have a message, and you have a responsibility to bring that message to others who haven't heard it. And if you for fear and for trembling, stay quiet, people won't hear it. You're the light of the world. You're the messenger. Christ has risen, hope is alive, and you are the messenger to bring that message to others.

Now, someone will ask me, of course, "Pastor, but what about verses 9 through 20?" Well, come back next week, okay? Come back next week, because we're going to discuss the ending of Mark's gospel and I promise you, it's a very fascinating and worthwhile study. But this gospel concludes with a notice that Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive and because Jesus has risen, our hope is alive. You know that's good news, that is gospel because every single one of us needs hope. I don't know where that is for you, but you need hope. And there are wrong places to look for hope, and there is a right place and we need to look for hope in Jesus. If your hope is in Jesus alone, then ironically, as the angel had told these women, he is going ahead of you. Jesus is your trailblazer. Because he lives, you will live. Because he's the firstfruits of the resurrection and has risen, you will rise again also. He received a new glorified body, and you will also, and you will meet him one day. He goes before us.

Maybe you fear that you're unworthy of Jesus like Peter, like one of his disciples. You've denied him. You've sinned against God. You've turned your back on him. Isn't it good

news to know this, Jesus receives deniers. Jesus receives sinners. He is a friend of sinners and he will accept you if you will repent and return to him. Now if your hope is not in Christ alone, if your hope is not in Christ alone, you have a false hope. You have a false hope, and you need to repent of that false hope, and you need to put your faith in Christ. Mark's whole point for this gospel, this message, is that God sent his Son, his only Son, into this world to do what you could never do, live righteously. You aren't righteous, my friend. Only Jesus is. You're not Jesus. Jesus is the righteous Son of God. He lived a life you never could. Jesus died and suffered the sentence of sin that you could never for all eternity completely satisfy. But he did it and that is why he is your only hope. But he's alive. And he's risen. And he's offering a message of salvation to you, if you will, but in faith, humble yourself and receive him.

Let's pray.