

Remnant Life Church  
March 31, 2024  
**The Power of Holy Week: Resurrection Sunday**  
Mark 16:1-14; John 20:1-8

The past two days had been brutal!

- They had witnessed Jesus crucified
- They knew where His body was buried
- This was a Friday and Saturday that every follower of Jesus in His three years of ministry just wanted to forget!
- Certainly, despair was hanging each one of them as they were all thinking, “Now what?” and “What’s next?”
- But Jesus had a way of turning their despair into victory

**READ – Mark 16:1-14**

The primary issue in these first hours of Sunday morning was belief

- Reports were beginning to come in, but no one was believing them.
- The disciples did not believe Mary Magdalene (**Mk 16:9-11**)
- They did not believe the 2 men who walked and spoke with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (**Mk 16:12-13**)
- Jesus had to eventually chastise them for their unbelief (**Mk 16:14**)
- No one wanted to get their hopes up to believe something that, while they did not believe, Jesus had told them several times was going to happen

**READ – John 20:1-8**

- I eluded earlier that Sunday morning to the disciples and followers of Jesus was a day like none other, one of great contrast
  - Saturday, the Sabbath has come and gone
  - They are still most likely in shock from what they had witnessed on Thursday night into Friday
  - They are not only concerned and certainly confused, but they are also still afraid
    - Afraid enough to run away (**Matt. 26:56**)
    - Afraid enough to have betrayed him (**Matt. 26:69-75**)
    - And afraid enough to now be in hiding (**John 20:19**)
  - But they also could very well be trying to encourage each other with a glimmer of hope
    - Had Jesus not said many times that He would rise again (**Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 18:31-33...**)
    - He had even said that He would appear in the sky (**Matt. 24:30-31**)
- **John 20** gives us the account of that Sunday morning

- According to John, Mary Magdalene had gone early to the tomb while the writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke record multiple women going only to find the stone rolled back (20:1)
    - This does not present a contradiction in the account
    - John only wrote about Mary, while the others included the other women who were with her
    - A woman would not be out by herself in a secluded place, especially at that time of day – it was not proper according to the customs of the time
  - She then rushed to the disciples to tell them what she has seen (20:2)
  - Although it does not record it, she is very likely being greeted with great skepticism
  - But of the 11 disciples there, Peter and John immediately set out and run to the tomb (20:3)
- They are running in the same direction, toward the same destination, but with very different feelings
    - John quickly outpaced Peter
      - It is likely that John, the youngest of the 12 was in his teens or very early 20's
      - But that was not the only reason he was faster
      - He was running with an expectant heart
      - He is the only disciple identified in the scripture as having been at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion (John 18:26)
      - John is running with great anticipation
    - Peter, likely one of the oldest since he is already married, is running with a different sense
      - He is running with a guilty heart
        - The last contact He had with Jesus was as the one who had denied Him (John 18:27)
        - Peter ran, but perhaps half-heartedly at first, not sure what to expect
- When they arrive at the tomb, they approach the entrance in very different ways and see it very differently
- The Bible uses three distinct Greek words for how they looked in
    - John arrives first but stops outside and “looks” in (20:5)
      - This word “look” is translated as to see something clearly but not necessarily in its entirety
      - What he saw was the body linen lying in place
    - Peter arrives and rushes past John so that he is fully in the tomb (20:6)
      - He “saw” meaning to closely scrutinize the clothes and face cloth
      - Because of how he was looking, Peter could determine that the grave clothes were orderly and neat - an unusual event
      - This would have added further proof that this was not the work of a hasty robbery who would have thrown off the grave clothes

- John then finally enters (20:8)
  - It says he “saw” meaning to comprehend or fully grasp, and he believed
  - John now knew and was convinced what had taken place not just through the physical evidence but with belief in his heart
- John and Peter leave, but Mary remains, she then looks in, and encounters the two angels (20:10-11)
  - Note that she is so overcome with grief that she seems to have a rather calm conversation with 2 obvious angels
    - It is the same grief that keeps her from recognizing Jesus a moment later
  - One angel sat at the head and the other at the feet where Jesus lay (John 20:12)
    - The head-to-feet posture is a symbolic notation of totality, of fullness and of completion
  - The other gesture is that of the grave clothes
    - The cloth that covers the face is folded neatly
    - It has been said that the folded napkin is in of itself a message
      - “I’ve left temporarily, but I will return” - in the Far Eastern culture
      - Unfortunately, there is nothing historically to support this, but the analogy is a good one
      - Jesus had left, but He would be returning!
- How did the Priests explain what had taken place?
  - The Jewish leaders also had heard these wild predictions of Jesus, claiming He would rise from the dead
    - It is why they posted the guards and sealed the great stone – not in belief but in a political move
    - But now they needed to come up with an explanation
  - Matt.28:11-15 tells us what took place
    - The soldiers reported the empty tomb to the chief priests
    - The priests bribed them and demanded that they lie about what they saw – that Jesus’ body had been stolen
    - Consider now what the religious leaders did throughout this entire scenario in their efforts to rid themselves of Jesus
      - They used treachery to arrest Him
      - They resorted to illegal tactics to try Him
      - They used slander to accuse Him before Pilate
      - They used bribery to try and silence the truth when Jesus did exactly what He said He would do
    - The enormity and impact of what they had seen was so great that the Roman soldiers were willing to agree to say that they had fallen asleep on their watch...
    - ...just a side note - if this were true, and they were asleep, how would they have known specifically that the disciples stole the body?

- Remember that admitting they had failed at their military duty was a severely punishable offense, even to death.
  - Every one of these efforts failed because the truth will ALWAYS win out over lies and deception
- John and Peter both came rushing to the empty grave with very different expectations
  - John stopped at the entrance
  - Peter rushed in even though the last thing he had done was deny Jesus
  - Both men wanted to know the truth, both certainly had questions, but only one was willing to put himself all the way in to find it

During WWII a young mother found herself on the last train out of Poland during Hitler's regime. She had her first-born toddler and her newborn nursing infant with her. The bombing was fierce, and the train had to stop many times for the passengers to take cover. A trip that should have taken a few hours took several days.

The food ran out and there were no liquids to be had and, as a result, when they arrived at their destination, the infant was starving and ill. A group of nuns met her there and took the baby to their hospital while the mother and toddler rested. The mother felt great relief at the apparent reprieve.

But the joy was short-lived. The next morning she was given the news that the hospital had been bombed during the night and that her baby had not survived. The mother was given a flashlight to search for her baby's body.

What a tragic scene. Imagine the confusion, the pain, the grief, the hopelessness of a mother, herself a doctor, whose hands and skill had no doubt saved many lives but was helpless to save her own child.

The mother is desperately seeking through the rubble, her little one in tow. She is crying loudly, together with many others also there desperately searching. Suddenly, there is another cry - the sound of an infant. Could it be? She runs to where the sound comes from, and there in the rubble, she finds her baby ... alive.

What incredible relief and overflowing joy. All the questions now do not need to be answered. All the "What-ifs" no longer mattered. Her baby is alive.

That is what the resurrection of Jesus has done. It changed the mood of the crucifixion for the disciples then and for us today. Out of despair has come hopeful rejoicing. Christ is risen!

- Here is what is true this morning on Resurrection Sunday 2024 –
  - Jesus loves you
  - He died for you to pay the penalty of your sin
  - He defeated death and conquered the grave by rising again
  - And...He is coming back!