

Christ Community Covenant Church
Because He Lives! (Easter)
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 5, 2015

There are lots of surprises at Easter time. I guess that all makes sense, going back to the very first morning that the disciples found the tomb empty. No one expected that. The disciples were on the run and hiding in the shadows of Jerusalem. Overnight Jesus had gone from being the ascending star of Kingly hope for his people to being a political criminal arrested at midnight. He is then taken through a series of kangaroo trials and physical indignities and tortures before a menagerie of sleepy authorities one after another - King Herod himself finally gets to meet Jesus and spends his time with Him mocking him. Then there was Caiaphas, the High Priest who hired the thugs that arrested Jesus. Archeologists suspect he hung him by his shoulders by rope for several hours till his arms were raw and bleeding just to show him who was boss. Imagine the surprise of the city that went to bed after a meaningful Passover meal on Thursday only to find Jesus hanging on a cross on a Friday morning outside of town. The troublesome man hurriedly put to death before the crowds could protest.

Surprise. And not of a good kind. Worse than finding a rock when you thought there might be candy.

But then the biggest surprise of all, come Sunday morning the tomb is empty and Christ is alive not dead. How can that be?

A lot of us struggle with the idea that a man could somehow come alive again. And of course if that did happen, if Jesus did rise from the dead, this changes everything. **Because he lives** I can **know real truth**, I can **enjoy new life** and I can **experience love** like I have never found it before.

Let's go ahead and finish out our study of Mark with this reading this morning:

Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.

⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This account is the shortest of the four but that doesn't surprise us, Mark is always the shortest. But he packs a wallop on his concise and direct manner we can see the life changing nature of this fascinating climax to Mark's account of the life, death and life of Jesus Christ. In fact we can see it just by looking at two verses, verses 6 and 7. Let's start with the first one and the idea of **knowing real truth by looking at verse 6 – (remember this is the angel talking):**

V6

And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

This is a passage that is packed with truth, the realest truth you have every experienced!

Real Truth

Let me just review and put things into context here. The Angel says you're looking for Jesus and He's not here! "See where he should be – has not here." And this is very different from all the other so called messiahs that had come and gone and found their death. Dozens of messianic leaders – killed, and everyone went home, the followers scattered. **Only one movement didn't die and not only did it not die it exploded and took over the entire Roman Empire. It continues to be by far the largest religious movement on the earth.** Why is this one totally different?

If a person is skeptical about the resurrection they have to come up with an alternative reason that this movement not only didn't go away but exploded. "We don't know." Why would so many claim that they saw Jesus alive and be willing to die for that truth. Skeptics can't answer that very well. You see this real truth of the resurrection challenges your mind and world view.

This is interesting to me. Three times Mark specifically lists the women names, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Solome who visit the tomb. Repeating this over and over is the way historians did things if there were living eye witnesses. This makes sure that people who actually saw the event could be crossed examined. Living witnesses are there to make it sure that this is not received as a legend – "You can check the truth of this account with these living footnotes, these living citations of eye witness accounts, and not just one three, more than enough to meet the legal requirement of a reliable testimony."

Mark is saying by his writing form, "This is truth, this is history. You can talk to them yourself!"

The other thing people say is ancient people would believe anything." They just didn't have a good mind for this kind of thing. Back then people would just say "Resurrection, wow cool."

But Mark has a real truth for that skeptic too! Again and again Mark records Jesus as saying he would die and rise again. Mark had this incredible economy of style, and if Jesus said it three times most likely he said it much more than that, they just didn't want to hear it.

Mark 10:32-34

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

Over and over he said, "I will rise on the third day. Still, as the story plays out, nobody was expecting this! The disciples were on the run, the women (the only brave ones of the bunch) had bought expensive oils to anoint a dead body not a live body. No one expected this. Curiously, the scribes and Pharisees told Pilate Jesus said he was going to rise again so "we need an armed guard otherwise the second claim will be worse than the first!" At least his enemies were paying attention to what Jesus was saying!

You would think the disciples would say "huh, it's the third day, maybe we should go take a look, what could I hurt??"

The reason Mark is recording this in this manner is that he was saying "I know you're not going to believe this, who can believe this? I can't believe this, but it's real truth. It's like Mark is saying to the skeptics of today, "I know it sounds far-fetched but it's true."

Greeks and Jews didn't believe in resurrection. Greeks saw death as liberation of the soul. For them dead is dead. Jews, if they believed in a resurrection at all believed in a more future general resurrection but

not of an individual. Jews would be the last to imagine that God would visit us in such a way that we then worship a physical manifestation of Himself.

But you know what, Greeks and Jews did believe— by the hundreds of thousands in the first years of Christianity. They believed because **the real truth** challenged their world view so profoundly that they had to believe! The proof of the reality of the resurrection overwhelmed their religious and cultural biases. They had the intellectual ability to let the evidence challenge their belief system. Do you? Without bragging, I am no intellectual slouch. I have read philosophy, science, history, politics, and once I even tried physics. I don't just fall for any story. **I believe in the empty tomb with all my heart and mind and soul.**

And it is happening today by the tens of millions, new believers hearing about the resurrection for the first time in their lives and they have yielded to this compelling, real truth. How about you? Have you yielded to this very real truth? This is the realist truest truth you will ever encounter. Jesus said you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” And he said “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

Because He lives, you can be set free from the lies and the liar that have held you captive for so long!

New Life

Because He lives, this gospel challenges our minds with this profoundly real truth, and that's great! But because He lives, it also gives us the promise of grace that comes from new life. New Life to change your heart

(Pictures of newborn babies)

Pic 1 aardvark

Pic 2 duckling

Pic 3 hippo

Pic 4 baby

New life is great. **Because He lives, new life is a wonderful hope for all of us.** Look at the life the angel is breathing into the women and to the disciples in verse 7:

V 7

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

Actually let's look at what it didn't say. **“You go tell those faithless back stabbing cowards I'm coming for them. If you have any hope of being reinstated as my disciples you better grovel and say you're sorry and mean it this time.”** Jesus doesn't work the way we work, he doesn't look for his 'pound of flesh' (TY William Shakespeare). **He breathes life into their deadly shame and regret and fear. He says 'I still love you, I'm looking for you. I want to see you and to restore you.' You don't think that didn't bring new life to the downcast disciples. What a gift! He's forgiving them even before they repent! He's forgiving them so they can repent! This is new life!!**

He said “Tell the disciples **and Peter.**” Why? You know why. His betrayal was the worst. What if he had just said tell the disciples and didn't specifically reference Peter, Peter would have **said “You guys go; he's not talking to me. I failed Him in his darkest hour of need. I was his best friend and I let him die without a friend. You go to Galilee. I can't face him.”** But Jesus was saying, **“I have loving plans for you my disciples and for you too Peter you big jerk!”** This is so profound theological. Look at what this is saying – your screw up was the worst, that makes my forgiveness even deeper, that makes Peter's

repentance the most humble of all and that is what makes Peter then the most qualified to lead. And he does.

And Peter becomes the leader of this new movement of this new life. ***Peter learns that if you let your failure lead you to repentance, then it will lead you to resurrection, to new life. That will make you humbler and bolder at the same time.***

John 10:10b

I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

Because He lives, real truth in the resurrection –“I told you so” kinda truth - that will set you free and there ***is new life in resurrection that will release your heart*** and there is also a just love that will give you the power to change your world.

“Don’t be afraid,” Jesus says, “Go.” Go and tell the world, that because I live there is a new fresh wind of love. And not just love – ***Just Love***

Just Love

Isn’t it interesting how inflection alone in a voice can make all the difference with a word? The author of love isn’t offering you plain ordinary earthly love, with all kinds of strings attached. A performance based love you have to earn over and over. NO. If you fully understand the resurrection, it means you have enough love from God that you will have ***freedom from the world and its expectations*** and you will also have enough love ***from God that you will be free to love the world.*** We have a tough time making tough choices because we are afraid that this is the only world we will ever have. That is a lie. Real truth tells me that ***Because he lives there is another world.*** Because he lives I can experience a new life of hope and purpose. And this Love, so full of Justice that if we are confess our sins God with all our hearts believing He can save us then ***He is faithful and just to forgive us from all unrighteousness!***

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is ***faithful and just*** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

John 15:13

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life and rise again from the dead for his friends!

Because He Lives . . . I know that I will have a life, a new life in Christ, that is far more concrete than this life will ever be for me, and if this is true then who cares what it can do to me.

Because He lives, I can quote George Herbert in the face of death itself,

“Death used to be an executioner but the resurrection has made him for me just a gardener. Spare not death, do thy worst, all you can do is make me better than I was before.”

(Introduce movie)

Responsive Reading Benediction:

Since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has any power over him.

The life he lives, he lives to God. Alleluia!

Because of our sins, he was handed over to die; and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God.

The life he lives, he lives to God. Alleluia!

May the God of peace,
who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus,
provide us with every good thing we need
in order to do his will;

***And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and forever.
Amen.***

Go in peace, as witnesses of the risen Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

(After the Benediction) He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!