

The Good News For All Creation

Mark 16:1-20

Key Verse: 16:15

by Kevin Albright

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.’”

We have been studying Mark’s gospel for the last one year. What have we learned? Hopefully, we have learned many things. Especially, we should have learned about Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1 says, “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” We have been studying about the gospel of Jesus Christ. What does “gospel” mean? It means, “good news.” What is this good news? Imagine a news flash which declared, “World peace. All wars have ended.” Wow, that would be great news. The gospel of Jesus Christ is even better. In today’s passage, verse 15 declares, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” What is this good news worth telling to all the world? Let’s find out. There is one more verse as we close Mark’s gospel study which we don’t want to forget. It is Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This is also related to the good news about Jesus Christ. May God give us this good news in our hearts and souls and may God help us to share this good news with all the world, beginning right where we are.

Jesus Christ died a horrible death on the cross. Then he was buried in a cave-like tomb with a stone rolled across the entrance. If that had been the end of the story, it would be a tragedy more sorrowful than Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet.” But thanks be to God it didn’t and it doesn’t end there. Jesus Christ was crucified on a Friday, the day before the Sabbath. He was buried later that day and his dead body was placed in a tomb for the duration of the Sabbath. Verse 1 tells us, “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body.” These women were there when Jesus died on the cross. They were also there, watching where Jesus’ dead body was laid to rest in the tomb. Now they came to anoint Jesus’ dead body. Just think how much they loved Jesus. They couldn’t talk with him. They couldn’t eat with him. But they opened their purses and bought spices to anoint Jesus’ dead body. They only came to anoint his bruised, broken and blood-stained body. Who would do this except these women? Women like these are truly beautiful and sacrificial. They had nothing to gain by doing this one last act of love. They had nothing to gain. But God had a great reward for them.

Look at verses 2-3. “Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’” They remembered the massive stone which blocked Jesus’ tomb. They realized they would not be able to move it and they didn’t bring any strong men along to help them. But they didn’t have to worry about that. Verse 4-5 says, “But when they looked up,

they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.” Seeing the stone removed, they instinctively entered the tomb. Their intention after all was to anoint Jesus’ dead body with spices. That is why they came there. But a young man in a white robe alarmed them. Of course it was an angel, but they did not yet realize this.

Look at verses 6-7. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” The messenger knew why they had come. They had come looking for Jesus. The messenger also knew that Jesus had been crucified. Then the messenger gave them the three greatest words ever heard by mortal ear: “He has risen!” It meant, “Jesus Christ is no longer dead. He rose from the dead! Hallelujah! Christ lives!” Death cannot keep his prey—Jesus, my Savior! He tore the bars away—Jesus, my Lord! Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o’er his foes. He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!” Life has been answered. Jesus Christ wins! This is greater than any sports victory. This is greater than any battle victory. This is the greatest news the world has ever heard: Jesus Christ triumphed over the grave.

What then does this mean for the human race? First, it means our sins have indeed been forgiven. Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many. Jesus made a new covenant in his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. But if Jesus had died and remained in the grave, we would have no convincing proof that what Jesus claimed is true. Listen to what Paul says in 1Co 15:14-17, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” Since Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we have the promise and assurance that our sins are indeed forgiven by his blood.

Secondly, since Jesus rose from the dead, we have a living hope in the kingdom of God. Before Jesus rose from the dead, death remained our last enemy and we had no guarantees of what is to come after we die. But through Jesus Christ we now have the promise and assurance of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Since Jesus conquered death, we who are in him, can conquer death and plunge into life eternal with Jesus Christ our Lord. Remember Jesus’ own words in John 11:25-26, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” All other hopes in this world are dead hopes or dying hopes. For example, if our hope is in family, that is a dying hope since all the people we put our hope in are getting older and will die one day. The same is true for hope in money or fame or pleasure or career or friends. These things all fade and perish with time. Listen to Apostle Peter. He wrote in 1Pe 1:3-4 of the living hope: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in

heaven for you..." Those who have a living hope can live meaningful and victorious lives in Christ. On the other hand, apart from the hope and victory that are in Jesus, life is empty, vain and a chasing after the wind. It is one limitation and frightful dead end after another.

This was the good news which the women received at the empty tomb. This was the good news which they were told to go and tell the others. Notice something more. It wasn't something new which they had never heard. Jesus had told them already. They just weren't listening well. It didn't register in their minds and hearts. It was, as it were, too good to be true. The angel said, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." Though they had abandoned Jesus, he had not given up on them. He would meet them again in Galilee. There they would see him, just as he told them. When did he tell them? He told them right after predicting their desertion, "You will all fall away...But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." (14:28) There it is. Jesus had foretold his resurrection. The first time he foretold it was just after Peter's confession of faith. It was then that Jesus began to predict his suffering, rejection, killing and after three days, rising again. (8:31) Peter missed the rising part. After healing the boy who had convulsions from his evil spirit, Jesus left that place and passed through Galilee. He said to his disciples, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." (9:31) Again, on the way up to Jerusalem Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him, "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (10:33-34)

Here we learn the importance of listening carefully to Jesus' words and not just the parts we like. One day his words will be very relevant and significant to our situation. Heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus' words will never pass away. As Peter wrote, quoting Isaiah, "All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." (1Pe 1:24-25; Isa 40:6-8).

Notice the note in your Bible before verse 9. It says, "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." For the gospel to end at verse 8 is however an odd place to end. In fact, we know that the gospel of Jesus Christ does not end there. The gospel of Jesus Christ changed world history through those who believed and went and told others. Verses 9-20 are in fact an excellent though brief summary of the gospels and the book of Acts as to what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. One need only read Matthew, Luke and John to get a fuller story of Mary Magdalene's resurrection account, the two on the road to Emmaus and Jesus' appearance to his own Eleven disciples. The disciples were slow to believe the resurrection, even though several people testified to it. Finally, the risen Jesus himself appeared to the Eleven, as they were eating. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. It is man's lack of faith and stubborn refusal which often blocks the work of God.

Now look at verses 15-16. The Risen Jesus said to his stubborn, unbelieving disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” To these stubborn, unbelieving men Jesus gave the world mission command. He did not say, “When you become fully convinced that I’ve conquered sin and death and am truly alive, then go tell the world.” Jesus did not give them an option. It is not called, “The World Mission Option.” It’s called, “The World Mission Command.” Jesus commanded them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” What were they to do? Jesus said, “Go!” Who was Jesus sending? The ones with money? No, they had no money. The ones with vast knowledge? No, they were largely uneducated; their knowledge was Jesus’ words and their pattern was Jesus’ life. Jesus was sending anyone who would obey his word, “Go!” The Lord Jesus gives one promise: he will work with those who obey his commands. Where were they to go? Jesus said, “Into all the world.” All the world includes the people near and far, people like us and people unlike us, people who speak our language and people who don’t. Jesus died for all the world. His blood is able to cleanse their sins. His kingdom is for them to inherit. The good news is for all people, whether born a Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Jew, black or white, man or woman, old or young, educated or uneducated, rich or poor. Is there anyone Jesus’ blood cannot save? Is there anyone who doesn’t need this living hope? Is there anyone beyond the reach of this good news?

What are we to do? Jesus said, “Go...and preach the good news.” We are to tell the world. St. Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” It means we are to speak it, but we are also to live it. Do people know you are a follower of Jesus Christ? They should know by your words and by your actions. They should know by your humble and holy and loving life. Jesus promises that his power and presence will be with his people. The Risen Jesus ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God. One day he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. In the mean time, he is working through his people, through his word and through his Holy Spirit to save those who believe. The gospel of Jesus is absolute. It is not true for some but not for others. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Whoever does not believe will be condemned. This is not politically correct. Then why must we believe in Jesus Christ. Why can’t I just take it or leave it according to my own convenience and personal preference?

Galatians 2:21 is one of the many Bible verses that explains why: “I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.” Jesus’ death was not optional. It was essential for our salvation. In Acts 4:12 Peter declared, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Paul said it similarly in 1Ti 2:5-6, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.” Apostle John declared in John 3:18, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Jesus himself declared in John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Only Jesus Christ died for our sins. Only Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. Whoever believes in him will be saved. John 3:16 promises, “For God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This is the good news for all peoples of all nations, tribes and languages. This is the good news given to us to believe and be saved. And it is the

good news for us to share with a desperate and dying world. He has risen! May this good news give you hope and victory and make you a joyful witness of Jesus Christ. Amen.