



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Genuine Gospel Hope

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Mark 16:1-8

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16 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.

(Pastor prays)

The gospel writer Mark speaks in clipped sentences. There are no rhetorical flourishes, no spiritual embellishments; it's just the facts. He ended Chapter 15 in darkness, just three lonely, brave women who can't let go. They followed Jesus in His life, they contributed to His ministry, and they watched Him die. In Chapter 16, they've come to give the last full measure of devotion and prepare Him for the long night of burial. What a ghoulish scene we've stumbled onto in Chapter 16. It's a scene where nothing is as it seems. The stone is not in the way, the man is not dead and hope is not lost. Christ is not defeated; His followers are not doomed and death has not won! What we are about to examine for the next few moments, is the story that has given life to our movement and meaning to our souls. This story has given strength to thousands upon thousands of everyday Christians just like you. And today I want you to bask in

the hope of the resurrection. I want you to rejoice in the love of God that's found in Christ and I want you to be strengthened by the grace of God in Jesus found at the cross and the empty tomb. By His grace you can stand. By His grace you are going to make it. By His resurrection you will see that things are not always as they seem. Today is a day to celebrate, to rejoice and to have hope!

The Resurrection of Jesus is Our Hope

Hope gives us a new religion

John Mark opens this great chapter with a time stamp and, in so doing, he marks a change for us. Look what he says in verse 1. **16** *When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.* The godly women who had watched the crucifixion were leaving their homes in the dark. They had a mission to perform. J. C. Ryle said that they were driven by the power of strong love to Christ. It was a strange mix of courage and affection and devotion. It's no accident that the women are the first to the grave. The disciples are sunk in consuming disappointment. They've gone into hiding like wounded animals. Mark points us to the women. Get it in your mind now. On Friday, Jesus was nailed to the cross and died. On Saturday, which was the Jewish Sabbath, on this holy Saturday, Jesus rested dead in the tomb, thereby fulfilling all the Law of Moses. Remember what Jesus said: "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it ." In the text, the three women felt as if they were still under the law. They had to wait until the Sabbath was over before they could get the necessary supplies to complete the grim task of anointing the corpse of Jesus.

It's important to remember the restrictive and legislative nature of the Sabbath laws. You couldn't do business. You couldn't make visits. You couldn't even cook meals. We forget this. But before Jesus came, trying to live as a child of God meant a strict observance of all the laws of God which no one could do completely. More than that, the oppressive feel of the law did its intended work. It was a constant reminder that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God! And we need someone who can take our place and actually fulfill the law for us. And the simple sentence in verse 1 is a reminder that anything works-based is a different religion. Verse 1 is legalism, darkness and hopelessness. Verse 2 is the resurrection that changes the religion and the day. Verse 2 says, ² *And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen,*

they went to the tomb. “And very early on the first day of the week.” You see, ours is not a religion of keeping the law and you will be saved. Ours is a religion of Jesus who kept the law and He will save us. On Friday, when Jesus died on the cross and said, “It is finished,” the law was fulfilled and then punctuated by Jesus spending the Sabbath in the grave. Now Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Lord's Day. And every Sunday we celebrate legalism being shattered by grace. It's a new day. These three women were getting ready to experience the very first new day. A new day not of restrictions but of grace! This is why we worship on Sunday. We were all dead in sin and God made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him. By grace you have been saved. By God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, you have been saved. We don't live keeping rules to earn God's love. We live lives of obedience because of God's love. Every other religion, including legalism, is man reaching to please God. Christianity is God's love and grace to man through Jesus Christ. The resurrection is hope and hope gives us a new religion.

Hope gives us a new grounding

As the three women walk to the gravesite of Jesus, they realize they have a problem. Let's look at their conversation in verse 3: ³ *And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”* The obstacle was an opportunity for God to show His greatness. He used what they were worrying about to display His own glory. He did this because of the resurrection. Because the power of God raising Jesus from the dead is the same power it took to raise you from being dead in sin. Because of that power, He takes obstacles of pain and makes them opportunities for His glory. What does the resurrection mean? It means how you see the diagnosis of cancer. It changes how you see the loss of a spouse. It changes how you view the sins in your past. All of these obstacles are changed when viewed through the prism of the resurrection of Jesus. John Newton, an old African blasphemer, wrote “Amazing Grace.” He spent his early life working on slave ships and as a captain of a slave ship sailing the middle passage between West Africa and Charleston, S.C.. He was a terrible man who committed unspeakable atrocities. Christ saved him and called him and converted him and took a life that was so bad that was an obstacle to the Gospel and made him a picture of God's amazing grace. Here's what the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus does. It takes your life that has been an obstacle to God's plan and, through Christ, makes your life an opportunity for God's grace. The resurrection is hope. Hope is a new religion. Hope gives us a new grounding.

Hope turns panic into praise

Let me show you what I mean in verses 4, 5, and 6. Listen to the story unfold. Let's read it.

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. Twice in verses 5 and 6, Mark tells us they were alarmed, stunned, amazed, scared out of their minds. And even in verse 8 they were panic-stricken. And notice what the angel says in verse six: "Don't be alarmed. Everything is as it should be." In light of the resurrection, panic becomes praise and, in verse 6, the angel gives us three things that should turn our panic into praise. He says, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus means "YHWH will save." That was the name given to Jesus because He came to save His people, me and you, from our sins.

When John Newton was saved, he said there are two great truths: I am a great sinner and Jesus is a great savior. The angel said, Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Today is the day we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Let us always do so in the shadow of the cross. There on the cross, Jesus took every ounce of punishment and anger and judgment of God on our behalf. He is our substitute. The cross is where the judgment of God and the love of God meet. The judgment is abolished by Jesus as He says, "It is finished". And the love is given to us and displayed at the resurrection.

The angel gives us a third reason to praise. He says, "He is risen, He is not here." In spite of everything you have been through in life, the resurrection of Jesus gives us deep hope that promises to carry you through. We are running out of time, but I'd like to make one last point about resurrection and hope.

Hope is especially good for backsliders

Verse 7 might be my favorite verse in this passage because of the wonderful love of God packed into that little phrase, "Go tell His disciples and Peter." Peter. The head disciple who denied Jesus. He even knew Jesus during Jesus's most painful hour. Imagine being Peter. Some of you *are* him. Peter was going to *do* something and *be* something and he completely wrecked it by denying Jesus. But Jesus didn't deny him. The resurrected Jesus called for him and on the field

of Peter's defeat, Jesus restores, Jesus forgives, Jesus strengthens and Jesus makes it right. I thank God that the angel said, "Go tell His disciples and Peter."

Look, I want you to have hope. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus gives us that hope. Hope gives us a new religion. Hope gives us a new grounding. Hope turns panic into praise. Hope is especially good for backsliders.

If you're a Christian, you should celebrate that hope in Jesus today. If you are not, you can have that hope by grace through faith in Jesus.

(Pastor prays)