**Mark 16:1-8 VBC SUNRISE SERVICE 4/12/2020**

**BE NOT AFRAID**

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hello from the Pulliam’s at Buckhorn Ranch. It is good to connect with the church family from Victory Baptist. This is our first ever virtual sunrise service, and maybe the first time ever that you were allowed to attend church in your pajamas. I don’t know about you, but we sorely miss our fellowship with you each week and are looking forward to the day this quarantine is over. These are challenging days, but I believe this is also a unique opportunity for us to really connect in our homes and reset some of our priorities for the future. This morning I would like to look with you at the book of Mark, chapter 16. All four of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, bear record of the day Jesus rose from the grave. Chapter 16 is Mark’s account of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Let’s read Mark 16:1-8.

We just read about a historical event that has changed the course of history. The day that the crucified Savior emerged from the tomb is unforgettable. I believe the year 2020 will also be unforgettable for many reasons. I know you will find some things in common with these mourners on their way to the sepulcher, and the fear they experienced that morning.

**1) The Mourners**

- v. 1 *Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*

These three women were devoted followers of Jesus. They had witnessed His miracles, heard His teachings, and ministered to His needs at times during His earthly ministry. But, keep in mind these women were not coming to the tomb in hopes of finding a resurrected savior. They came having seen with their own eyes the death of their beloved Jesus. They came knowing that He was dead. Verse 10 tells us that the other disciples were still gathered where “… *they mourned and wept.”*

These devoted disciples had seen, only a couple of days before, one of the most horrifying, gruesome, torturous deaths known to man. They had witnessed a gross injustice, the death of an innocent man, a good man, perpetrated by their own leaders and the occupying force of a foreign government. Not only that, but it was the death of their beloved leader, the miracle worker, the teacher, the kind, loving shepherd, the compassionate healer, the hope of Israel, the Messiah, the Master, the King, the Son of God. They were torn to the very core of their being.

They were without hope. John 20:9 says, “*For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”* Their world had just been turned upside down. The only thing they could do was pay their respects at the grave, and properly anoint his body with burial spices. Our text tells us in v. 2 that the mourners came to the Sepulchre.

**2) The Sepulchre**

Sepulchre is an old English word that means tomb, or grave. Usually cut into stone, it is a place where a dead body was laid to rest. We read that Jesus was laid to rest in *“a new tomb”* belonging to a wealthy disciple named Joseph of Arimathaea. It was *“hewn out in the rock”* and had a *“great stone”* rolled in front of the door (Matt. 27:57-60).

- v. 2 “*And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”* Maybe you can picture these three ladies walking down the path, each carrying a parcel, maybe baskets containing some towels and burial spices. The horizon is beginning to turn pink, and everything else is gray and colorless. You can barely make out their shapes as they make their way through the early morning mist.

- In verse 3, their hushed conversation centers around, *“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”* The Bible tells us that the stone was “very great,” in other words, quite large. At the request of the Jewish leaders, it was being guarded by Roman Soldiers to insure that Jesus’ disciples did not come and steal His body.

- Verse 4 is where things begin to come alive. “*And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.”* Matthew 28 tells us it was *“the angel of the Lord”* that rolled the stone away. It was such a fearful sight that the soldiers who guarded the tomb, *“became as dead men,”* probably meaning that they feinted. Imagine the reaction of the mourners as they view this scene: surprise, bewilderment, confusion, but notice their first reaction in verse 5:

**3) The Fear**

Mark 16:5 “*And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were* **affrighted***.”* = *ekthambeo* = to astonish utterly: affright, greatly amaze.

Mark 16:8 *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they* ***trembled*** (*tromos* = quake with fear)*and were* ***amazed****:* (bewildered) *neither said they any thing to any man; for they were* ***afraid*** (*phobeo* = to be alarmed). Luke 24:5 says, *“they were* ***afraid****, and bowed down their faces to the earth.”* Even when Jesus appeared to some of them, the overwhelming emotion was fear: “But they were **terrified** and **affrighted**…” (Luke 24:37).

During this past couple of weeks, I have heard some interesting thoughts regarding fear. (The names mentioned here are only to give credit to the thinkers of these thoughts.) Anyone with a public voice is seeking to calm people’s fear. Max Lucado said we should replace fear with faith. That sounds good, but you don’t just arbitrarily turn up the volume of your faith. However, I will agree that faith is often determined by our response to the Word of God. You are faced with a decision whether to believe the promises of God regarding His care for you, or continue in faithless fear.

Last Sunday, I overheard my Dad’s TV as he listened to Charles Stanley. Dr. Stanley said that fear is a natural, God-given response to danger. One of man’s first recorded emotions in the book of Genesis was fear. When confronted by God, Adam said, *“I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid…”* (Gen. 3:10). Some fear is healthy, like teaching a small child to fear fire, because it could burn them. There is also unhealthy fear that causes us to panic, freeze, flee, fight, or hide. The world around us is displaying all of these.

Dave Ramsey counseled that fear must be replaced by facts – let your emotions work on what you know, *not* what you don’t know. One of his guests pointed out that fear changes us physically, emotionally and Spiritually. It causes us to *react*, rather than *act* with a “sound mind.” His remedy for fear was to take action – do what you can do, and trust God with the things that are beyond your control. These are all powerful thoughts, and good counsel for fearful times, but let’s look at our text to see how God ministered to the mourner’s fears on resurrection morning.

**a) His messenger**

Mark pictures *“a young man…clothed in a long white garment.”* Matthew says clearly that this was *“the angel of the Lord,”* God’s messenger. This one whose *“countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow…said unto the women,* ***Fear not*** *ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said”* (Matt. 28:3-6). Verse six of our text says that God’s messenger immediately ministered to their obvious fear: *“****Be not affrighted****: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here...”* God uses His messengers, both heavenly and human, to minister to our fears. What a comfort it is to have your pastor stand by your hospital bed, pray and read Scripture with you before a vital medical procedure. God’s messengers often encourage us with these words, “Don’t be afraid.” God ministered to the fearful mourners through His messenger, and secondly, through His Word.

**b) His Word**

Look at Mark 16:7: *“ But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him,* ***as he said unto you****.”*

Jesus gave specific words to His disciples, knowing the fate that He must shortly endure. The angel reminded them of these same words spoken by Jesus three days earlier. *“But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee”* (Matt. 26:32). If the Lord said, He will do it. Jesus promised that *“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away”* (Mark 13:31). God says, *“ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever”* (Isa. 40:8). The Bible promises that, if the Lord said it, He will do it!

Over 350 times, the Bible uses words like, *“fear not,”* or *“be not afraid.”* Obviously God did not intend that you and I live in fear, but that we would trust in the words He has spoken to us. Paul reminded Timothy, *“God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2Tim. 1:7).

God’s Messengers, and God’s Words continually encourage us to trust and not fear. But God also encourages us through His Son, the resurrected Savior.

**c) His Son**

Notice in the other gospel accounts how Jesus himself ministers to the fears of his followers: In Matt. 28:10, Jesus appeared to the mourners at the Sepulchre and said, *“****Be not afraid****: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”* In Luke 24:36-37 The disciples were gathered behind closed doors, doubtfully hearing reports that Jesus had been seen alive. *“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them,* ***Peace be unto you****. But they were* ***terrified*** *and* ***affrighted****, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.”*

John 20:19 *“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them,* ***Peace be unto******you****.”* It is clear from these accounts that Jesus himself ministered to the fears of His followers that day.

**CONCLUSION:**

One of the first emotions seen on resurrection morning was fear. God ministered to His children through His messengers, His Word, and His Son. The message was clear: *“Fear not, Don’t be afraid, Peace be unto you.”* I believe 2000 years later, the message has not changed. In your circumstances today, the risen Savior would say to you, “Don’t be afraid, trust in me.” A famous preacher once said that the pages of many a family Bible are tear stained over these comforting verses in John 14: *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* I hope this resurrection morning finds you confident in God’s messenger, His Word, and His Son. If not, let me encourage you to hear His words of comfort, and rest unafraid in our risen Savior.