

**Flawed People in the Hand's of the
Resurrected Christ**

Mark 16:1-8

I want to approach our text for this morning by reminding you of a great truth: “Ninety percent of what we worry about – never happens – except in our imaginations.” Can you imagine the energy we would save if Christians followed the Apostle Paul’s counsel in **Philippians 4:6**, “Don’t worry about anything . . . pray about everything.”

There is something else Christians can do that would radically reduce worry and fretting. It is a two-step discipline: Step One – we need to truly hear what the Lord has said; Step Two – we need to truly believe it. Practicing those two disciplines will transform our lives and our effectiveness for Christ.

Before we look at the events of Mark 16, let me take you back to the exact location on earth where the first prophesy about Christ and Satan was fulfilled. We discover this location in Mark 15:22-37,

“And they brought him [Christ] to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull) . . .²⁵ And it was the third hour [9:00 a.m.] when they crucified him . . .³³ And when the sixth hour had come [12 noon], there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour [3:00 p.m.] . . .³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry [it is finished] and breathed his last.³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.”

Golgotha is the place where the perfect, once for all time sacrifice for sin, was offered by Christ and accepted by God the Father. When Christ died at Golgotha the disciples thought it was the end of the world, the end of their dreams and hopes – but actually it was when Satan received a head

wound from which he can never recover. This event was foretold in **Genesis 3:15**, when God the Father told Satan, shortly after the fall of mankind, “. . . he [Jesus, the virgin born descendant of Eve] shall bruise your head [skull], and you shall bruise his heel.” Christ paid a price to deliver that blow to Satan’s head, but a bruised heel is far better than a crushed skull.

Exactly how did Christ’s death and resurrection impact Satan? A big part of the answer is found in Revelation 12:10, which refers to Satan as the accuser of the brethren. Leveling accusations against believers to God has been one of Satan’s fondest activities. But let me illustrate the new dynamic which kicked in at Golgotha. When Mark Alvis messes up, and Satan learns about it and declares to God that I am not worthy to be a part of God’s eternal family, the ascended Lord Jesus can rightfully say, “Yes, Mark has sinned, but I have fully paid the penalty of that sin at Golgotha. Don’t you remember? That is when I smashed your head under my heel, and then rose from the dead and celebrated my victory over **you** and **all your evil cohorts**. I even had the Apostle Paul write about it in **Colossians 2:13-15**,

“. . . having forgiven us [Christ’s followers] **all our trespasses**, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. He [Christ] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in the cross.”

Christians, do we truly hear what Christ is telling us? A tremendous victory on behalf of sinful people was achieved at Golgotha. Do we truly believe it? **Now** let’s go to Mark 16:1-3,

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome [Matthew 27:56, seems to indicate that Salome was the mother of James and John. These three women] bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him [the spices were to cover the stench of what they thought would be Christ’s rotting corpse].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?’”

They were worried because the stone was bigger and heavier than they could move. Question: Did they need to worry about rolling that stone away? No. That was a total waste of energy. We must acknowledge from this passage that none of the Apostles, nor any of these ladies had been able to hear or believe what our Lord Jesus had clearly stated before He went to Jerusalem. In Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31, and Mark 10:34, Jesus said, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” Did any of these women believe that Jesus was going to rise from the dead in three days? No. And the reason they couldn’t comprehend Christ’s resurrection is because they couldn’t comprehend Christ’s death. It did not fit the narrative they had been taught concerning the Messiah of God, the Kingly offspring of David.

I can sympathize with their confusion. After all, how could the Messiah die before He had accomplished the blessings foretold in the Old Testament? For example, Micah 5:2 foretells that the Messiah, the ruler of Israel, would be born at Bethlehem [and He was], and then goes on to say in **Micah 5:4**, “. . . he shall be great to the ends of the earth.” How could

the Messiah die before He became great to the ends of the earth?

In **Isaiah 9:6-7**, we read,

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.”

It is because of these kind of prophecies that the Jewish people were mystified about the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Who is this one who would die for the transgressions of many? Fortunately the New Testament makes it clear that it was the Messiah’s death and His glorious resurrection – which opened the flood gates of God’s grace and forgiveness upon the nations. But not to be unfair, the Old Testament is clear as to **where** Christ would rule the nations. We are told in Daniel 7:13-14 and in **Psalms 110:1-2**,

“A Psalm of David. The LORD [God the Father] says to my Lord [God the Son]: ‘Sit at my right hand [referring to Christ’s ascension] until I make your enemies your footstool.’ ² The LORD sends forth from Zion [Jerusalem] your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!”

I know you all remember what I am about to say, because I have preached it from this pulpit and you always remember everything I say. But let me remind you, that all through the Old Testament, God’s footstool was His temple at Jerusalem. Who are God’s temples today? All believers in Christ, even though we were once at enmity with God. That supernatural transformation from being enemies – to being temples – required the death and resurrection of Christ.

The problem is that the disciples and these ladies, had been taught an incomplete narrative about the Messiah. A narrative which prevented their

ability to hear and believe Jesus, when He clearly told them that He was going to die and rise from the dead at Jerusalem. Therefore, none of these ladies knew on that Sunday morning, that Jesus had already risen from the dead and left the tomb. The reason God decreed an earthquake and then had an angel to roll the stone away [Matthew 28:2], was to enable them to see that it was empty. And so all the hurried buying of spices and the worry about who would roll the stone away, was a waste of time and energy. If they had only heard what Jesus said and believed that He would rise from the dead, they would have been celebrating and telling others the good news. Instead, let's read what actually took place in Mark 16:4-8,

“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 [both at the presence of the young man, an angel, and by the absence of the body of Jesus]. ⁶ And he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen [just as He said He would]; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter [you idiots – why didn't you believe what Jesus told you? No. What the angel actually said was] . . . 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.”

I don't want to alarm anyone, but up to this point, none of Christ's followers believed that He would rise from the dead. Can we be Christians if we do not believe in the resurrection of Christ? No. Which means all these people were still on their journeys to becoming fully devoted followers of Christ. It also means that some of Christ's most important ministry to His followers took place after He rose from the dead.

Friends, if Christ had not risen from the dead, none of us would be followers of Christ. I say that because all of Christ's followers initially thought that His death ended everything. It was His resurrection that changed the course of history.

And by the way, it required no faith for the disciples or these women to believe in Christ's resurrection. Why? Because in very short order, they all saw Him with their own eyes, spoke with Him, touched him, ate with him and for forty days heard Christ tell them about the Kingdom of God – a kingdom that was going to spread from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world. Listen to **Acts 1:3 and 8**,

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men [and women] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God [and He said something else which is very important] . . . ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

After spending forty days teaching His followers about His kingdom here on earth, Jesus then ascended back into heaven and sat upon the throne of power at the Father's right hand. Tens day later He sent the Holy Spirit to give birth to the Church, which is God's new temple upon the earth. And from God's new temple, living water began to flow out – water which has changed the world in remarkable ways.

There is a brand new book entitled: Unimaginable: What Our World Would Be Like Without Christianity. In this book, Dr. Jeremiah Johnston, who is an Oxford trained church historian, traces out the benefits Christianity has brought to the world. It is staggering. And the

resurrected, ascended Lord Jesus has been able to do all this with flawed people – like you and me.

At this point let me mention that in our earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark, it ends at verse 8. Many scholars say that Mark wrote more, but it got lost. I have a hard time believing God would allow that. I believe the Bible has been supernaturally preserved. And so why would Mark end his Gospel so abruptly, with the women and the disciples all in a panic? I believe he does so to show **what** the resurrected Christ can and has accomplished with flawed people.

Most scholars would say that Mark wrote this Gospel around A.D. 58. By that time the Apostle Paul could already write in Romans 1:8, “. . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.” Paul was probably referring to the Roman Empire. But wow! Look what the resurrected Christ accomplished through flawed people. And He is still accomplishing great things today.

John Piper reminds us that the bottom line of the Bible is that life is all about God’s glory. The longer I live, the more I want God to be glorified. And so let’s finish by looking at some of the ways in which God receives glory from us. In **II Corinthians 4:15**, the Apostle Paul said that he went to Corinth, Greece to share the gospel because, “. . . as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.” God is glorified when more and more people embrace the gospel and give Him thanks. In **Romans 15:8-9**, Paul again teaches us about what glorifies God,

“ . . . Christ became a servant to the circumcised [He was born of the Jews] to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God’s promise was that Abraham’s descendants were going to become like the sand of the seashore in number and would bless all the nations of the world] . . .⁹ in order that the Gentiles [the nations] might glorify God for his mercy.”

The Church started out all Jewish, but quickly saw the Gentiles begin to pour into Christ’s kingdom. Today there are far more Gentile descendants of Abraham than Jewish descendants of Abraham. And what is it about Abraham that so pleased and glorified God? Paul tells us in **Romans 4:18-21**,

“In hope he [Abraham] believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told . . .¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old) – [when Isaac was finally born] . . .²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.”

Abraham listened to what God told him and believed what God told him. And so what about us? Are we fully convinced that God can bless all the nations through flawed people – who are committed to living and sharing the gospel? My confidence is not in flawed Christians – like me. My confidence is in the promises of God. And when we believe God’s promises, we give glory to God.

I am excited about beginning forty days of prayer in union with over a hundred thousand believers in Christ. We will be praying for God’s promised blessings to be poured upon people all over the world. May God be glorified greatly in these days ahead. And all of it has been made

possible because of what Christ accomplished on the cross and by rising from the dead to show that He has the authority to do everything He has promised.

In WWII, a statue of Christ in one of the cities of France was damaged by the bombing of the Germans. The people of the city took the statue down to protect it from any further harm. After the war, the statue was put back in its place, but to everyone's horror, the hands of Jesus had been destroyed. The hands that had been pierced for our iniquity. There was sadness upon the people until one day they found that a small sign had been placed at the feet of Jesus. The sign said, "We are the hands of Jesus."

One of my favorite passages in Colossians is when the Apostle Paul speaks of his calling from God to minister to the Church, which Paul refers to as Christ's Body. One of Paul's most notable honors was to reveal a great and glorious mystery, which had not been made clear in the Old Testament. And what was this great and glorious mystery? Paul declares it in Colossians 1:27 – it is – "Christ in you the hope of glory." Friends, Christ has risen, and He is in us, and He goes before us, and He will never leave us. Let's pray.