

## **The Resurrected Servant - Mark 16:1-8, Romans 6:1-14**

### **Introduction**

All four Gospels provide for us an account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Across the 18 combined verses found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we are given a description of the most important theological truth associated with Christianity. In fact, it's the reason we are here today. **Jesus Christ is Alive and His tomb is empty!**

Let's read the account from Luke together this morning. **Read Mark 16:1-8**

If you came this morning expecting to hear the standardized boring religious message that has been repeated year after year across many a Christian church, I hope you will instead be pleasantly surprised. This is not a day to be religious, it's also not a day of mourning, which was Good Friday, nor is it a day to be sad, that was yesterday. Instead, it is a day to **rejoice!** And be **glad!** As the Psalmist says, *"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* Let us focus on the greatest event that up to this point has ever occurred in human history.

In all my time of ministry, I've discovered that people either chose Christ, they deny Christ, or they hang out somewhere in the middle. I want to remind you about the warning about the last option. **Revelation 3:15-16**, concerning the Laodiceans says, *I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.* I will not sugar coat the purpose for today's message. Today is also the day of salvation. You see, the empty tomb of Jesus gives genuine meaning and factual evidence to support why you should believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. It also answers numerous questions that many people have asked for centuries.

1. **Doubt** - The empty tomb first answers the questions of doubt. Questions such as: Which religion is true? How do I know which religion is best for me? How do I choose? All of these are very fair questions and are ones you are either asking today or you asked at some point in your life. Or, you know someone who is asking these type questions. People today face a veritable supermarket of religions from which to choose. One can stand and see the well-stocked shelves and wonder, "Which one should I choose?" There is only one problem. All the choices have been poisoned except one. How can a person know that they have found the pure one, the righteous one, the best one, the most secure one?

It's a crucial question because on the surface there seems to be no significant difference between Christianity and some of the other options of the world. They have great leaders ... and so do we. They have written scriptures ... and so do we. They have miracle stories ... and so do we. They have high ethical standards ... and so do we. They have a long and rich history ... and so do we. Therefore, the casual shopper could be excused for assuming that all religions are the same. I want to tell you today; they are not the same. It's simply not so! There is only one that is pure and that can be trusted as true.

There is one fundamental difference, one foundational fact that sets Christianity forever apart from every other religious system in the world. Go to the tombs of the founders of the great world religions.

Mohammed .... Dead and in the tomb!

Buddha .... Dead and in the tomb!

Moses .... Dead and in the tomb!

Charles Taze Russel founder of JW.... Dead and in the tomb!

Joseph Smith .... That's right! .... Dead and in the tomb!

Jesus .... Well, He's alive and the tomb is empty. The factual truth of Jesus' resurrection answers all your questions of doubt. Jesus is alive and by placing your faith in Him, it guarantees that you have selected the correct one.

2. **Guilt** – The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* It also tells us previously in verse 10 that, “None is righteous, no, not one.” The depravity of man, or as we often refer to it, the sin of man, is without a doubt the most understood doctrine in the Bible. How do we know this? Just turn on the TV, or the radio, or go to a social media app. What you will hear and see cannot be denied. Because of our faults, because of our sins, we struggle with the guilt associated with those things and are forced to ask ourselves daily, “How can I rid myself of all this guilt and shame?”

Usually, people attempt to answer this question by either doing good things, or by covering their guilt through pleasures, or sometimes they decide to get serious about God. Those who live their life doing good things hope they can remove their feelings of shame and guilt by working hard on their job, or by being a great parent, or volunteering in the community. They may even donate large sums of money to “good, humanitarian” organizations. By their good works, they hope to find freedom, and forgiveness from the guilt that exists within their hearts and minds.

Then there are those who seek to relieve the pains of sin by “living life to the fullest.” They think if they ever stop the party train, then they will have to stop and face reality. So, they keep on moving, they keep on partying, they keep on running from their reality. It's why many in our society need the alcohol, they need the drugs, they need the pornography, they need the pleasures of the world to keep them from having to face the reality of the inner pain associated with their imperfections and subsequent guilt.

Then there are those who use God and the church to help alleviate their pain. They get baptized, they join a church, they serve in the church, they even read their Bible more than the average person. All to remove the guilt they feel on the inside.

All these options, however, fail because they don't deal with the root problem, which is sin and the true moral guilt that exists between all of humanity and a holy God. No one can get around that issue. You can't be good enough to erase your guilt, you can't laugh enough to drown out your guilt, you can't pray enough to cover your guilt. It can't be done.

Only an empty tomb answers the problem of guilt. You say, “But I thought it was the death of Christ that forgives our sins.” Well, it is, but it’s only true because Christ rose from the dead. If Jesus is still in the tomb, then we are still in our sins. If Jesus did not rise, then the Romans and the Jewish leaders were right when they crucified him. If Jesus didn’t come back from the dead, then Calvary was just another execution of a well-meaning, but misguided religious leader. Without the empty tomb, Good Friday isn’t good. Yes, the death of Jesus forgives one’s sins but only because the resurrection of Jesus made His death effective.

Do you want forgiveness and release from your guilt? Look ... look ... look to the crucified, buried, and alive and risen Son of God, Jesus Christ. Look at him who rose victoriously and you will find forgiveness, freedom, and peace.

3. **Loneliness** – People across the world struggle with loneliness. They wonder where they can find a devoted friend, where can they find someone who cares? At first thought, you may think, how could someone be lonely. We live in a populated area and for those of us in the US, we live in one of the most privileged societies on Earth.

The reality is that we’re all in the fast lane now—get up, get dressed, go to work, come home, do yard work, do the laundry, cook and then eat dinner, unwind, watch TV, go to bed, get up tomorrow morning and do it all over again. Wash, rinse, repeat! We live in such a fearful society that we never really get to know our neighbors. We put up fences, shrubs, and security systems to protect our privacy. People moved in and out so fast that we hardly knew they were here, much less that they moved away. Hundreds of thousands of people go to bed each night with burdens and cares and heavy hearts, frustrated, bored, worn out, tired, having questions with no answers, problems with no solutions. And no one can call a genuine, close friend.

People wonder what Hell will be like. T. S. Elliot calls it the Great Void, the land of ugly nothingness. We might imagine it as the one place in the universe where you are utterly, totally, and eternally alone. You scream and no one answers. You cry for help, but no one hears your voice. You are falling, falling, falling through the darkness. You are alone. That’s what Hell is like. The place of utter aloneness.

Against that awful reality stand the words of Jesus, “*I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Matthew 28:20. But don’t forget that he said those words on this side of the Empty Tomb, after he had already come back from the dead. Those words carry their true weight only if Jesus is alive. If the empty tomb did not happen, then Jesus is not with us, and we are truly alone, for eternity.

We are reminded that Jesus says, “*I will never leave you*” from Hebrews 13:5. That’s a promise. It’s true and you can rest your life upon it. If you belong to him, he will never leave you. Because he rose from the dead, he lives today and will be with us forever. Therefore, we are never alone and never forsaken.

4. **Death** - Four thousand years ago Job asked this question, “If a man dies, will he live again?” Job 14:14. For many, that is the greatest of all the questions, it is the central question Easter was meant to answer. When we stand over the lifeless body of someone we love; we often feel helpless, or defeated, or angry and afraid. For many, death is sobering, frightening, terrifying. The Bible in 1 Corinthians 15:26 calls death “*the last*

*enemy*". No man has ever lived who hasn't thought about or maybe even trembled over the fact of his own death. Deep in our hearts we wonder how we will do when our time comes to cross the Great Divide. How will it be with us when we must go through the valley of the shadow of death? Will we be afraid? Or will our faith stand the test? What happens when we die? Does an empty tomb answer the question of death? If it doesn't, then everything else I've said is just a sham.

The empty tomb of Jesus means death was defeated, and for those who believe in Him and place their faith in Him, it absolutely answers all our concerns about death.

I want to read something very encouraging for this morning, but before we read this, I want you to know that because Christ lives, we also live! Here on Earth and for eternity. Not just today, not just in this life, but tomorrow and in our next life, for eternity with Him! That's why Easter is important! That's why the empty tomb is so significant!

### **Let's Read Romans 6:1-14**

If a man dies, will he live again? **Yes! Yes! Yes!** Here is the answer to the greatest question, the deepest question, the final question. All of us will face death someday. But for those who know Jesus, death holds no fear. We're not afraid of the darkness for Jesus is the Light of the world. We don't fear the valley of the shadow of death for Jesus has said he will be our guide. We may die, but we won't stay dead. Jesus has the keys to heaven and one day He's going to come back for us.

*Jesus died on the cross for our forgiveness. He conquered death so that we would not fear it. He rose from the dead so that we could live. He did His part. Now, it's up to you. It's your move. Will you accept Him as your Savior today?*