

PASSION WEEK - PART 3:
“THE RISEN KING”
MARK 16:1-8

Personal Introduction

Good afternoon everyone. I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to preach the Word of God for us on this Easter Sunday!

—

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently on the third (and final) part of our sermon series called “Passion Week” - where we're going through the final week of Jesus' life on Earth, leading to his death and resurrection...

Before we begin, let me pray for us.

<prayer>

—

Introduction

During World War II, there was a secret mission known as Operation Valkyrie. The goal of this mission was to overthrow Hitler and end his regime (once and for all). But the plan failed.

And in the aftermath, hundreds of people were arrested. Many were executed. And those already imprisoned were fast-tracked to their execution.

One of those people was a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

And he knew that his life was about to come to an end.

Now, imagine if that's you... What would you be feeling if you knew that your life was about to end?

- Maybe fear? Because of the unknown that's to come...
- Maybe sadness? Because of the family members, friends, and loved ones that you won't see again...
- Maybe regret? Because of all the things that you still wanted to do in life...
- What we may feel is hopelessness.

But that's not what Bonhoeffer felt... Because Bonhoeffer's hope was not in those things, but in Jesus Christ.

And in his last words... when all seems lost... This is what Bonhoeffer said - "This is the end. For me the beginning of life... Jesus is alive. I have hope."

Jesus is alive... I have hope...

The One Thing

When all seems lost, we still have hope because Jesus is alive!

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to Mark 16:1-8.

For context:

- It's been a tough day for Jesus' followers. They had just seen their Lord and friend, Jesus, betrayed by one of his own apostles, then arrested, beaten, mocked, and then crucified naked on the cross.
- And after Jesus died, his body was buried in a tomb, and the entrance of the tomb was covered by a large stone.
- It seemed like this was the end...

And this is where we are in today's passage.

I'll read for us Mark 16:1-8.

Mark 16:1-8 (ESV)

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.

This is God's Word.

Overview

- I. The women's expectation (vv. 1-3)
 - II. The women's discovery (vv. 4-7)
 - III. The women's response (v. 8)
-

I. The women's expectation (vv. 1-3)

Let's look at verse 1 - It was the end of Sabbath Day... So we know that it's Saturday evening here (because Sabbath would normally start on Friday sundown and then end on Saturday sundown).

And this means that if you're a Jew, then you wouldn't be able to do any kind of work during this time. Which means that Jesus' followers... They weren't really able to do anything except mourn and grieve..

And so when Sabbath was finally over, then they're finally able to go to the market and buy some spices, so that they could anoint Jesus' body with it.

And, back in those days, anointing a dead body would be done for 2 main reasons:

- (1) To reduce the smell of the decomposing body.
- (2) To honor the person who just died.

So these followers wanted to simply honor their Lord, and to properly grieve his death.

<pause>

So then who were these followers who were planning to anoint Jesus' body? Well, if you had to guess, you'd probably say that - if anyone would be doing this - it'd probably be Jesus' apostles, right? Maybe Simon Peter, James, and John (his closest disciples)?

- But that's not who we see here. Instead, we see 3 women:
 - Mary Magdalene
 - Mary the mother of James
 - and Salome

Which begs the question: who were these women? And where's Jesus' other disciples?

- Well, unfortunately, back when Jesus was arrested, his disciples were so scared that they ran away. So some didn't even see Jesus getting crucified.
- They're too afraid that what happened to Jesus would happen to them...
- So then as the men were scattered, it's these 3 women who stayed... You have...

1. Mary Magdalene - who was one of Jesus' followers who he casted 7 demons from.
 2. Mary - the mother of James (who was one of Jesus' 12 apostles).
 3. and Salome - also the mother of Jesus' apostles, James and John.
- Now, the key thing about these 3 women is that between the 3 of them - they had seen (with their own eyes) Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial.
 - Unlike the other disciples who might not have seen these events, they were there for all these things.

So it's these 3 women who are going to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body. And they started going there very early on Sunday morning (the first day of the Jewish week).

And as they're making their way there... they're asking one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

- From their question, we can get a sense of their despair and helplessness...
 - They're willing to go to Jesus' tomb. But now, as they're getting closer, they're realizing that they may not even be able to anoint Jesus' body even if they wanted to. Because there's gonna be a large stone covering the entrance & they won't be able to move it by themselves & there's no one to help them.

Now, up to this point, we can make 2 important observations - what does it tell us that they bought spices for Jesus' body and they're just talking about this stone that's blocking Jesus' tomb? It tells us something about their expectations.

- They had no idea that they're about to witness the greatest event in the history of the world.
- What they're expecting to see is - not a miracle - but... for Jesus' tomb to remain untouched.
 - For a large boulder to still be blocking the entrance.
 - And for Jesus' body to be decomposing inside.
 - That's what they're expecting.

So none of Jesus' followers really expected that he'd rise from the dead!

And to be honest, that seems to be a reasonable expectation, right? Because that's what we'd naturally expect to happen when someone dies - their body would remain dead and decompose.

But here's the thing, from the other Gospel accounts, we know that Jesus had already told his disciples - at least 3 times - that "I will die, and - in 3 days - I will rise again."

- He literally gave them this heads-up.

So you'd think that at least one of the disciples would jump up and say, "Hey guys, everything has happened exactly as Jesus said!"

- He said that one of the apostles would betray him (that happened)!
- He said that his disciples would scatter (that happened)!
- He said that Simon Peter would deny him 3 times (that happened)!
- He said that he'd die (that happened)!
- You know what? All that's left is the resurrection!
- Guys, I think maybe we should expect Jesus to rise again!

But that didn't happen; that's not what they expected - they expected for Jesus' body to remain dead and to be decomposing.

<pause>

In that sense, their expectation was wrong.

But... before we judge Jesus' followers, let's try to put ourselves in their shoes...

- After all that's happened, what would their mental and emotional state be like?
- I think that it'd be very understandable for them to be so discouraged and spiraling down at this time (because they've just gone through something very traumatic).
- And for these followers, they'd literally left everything behind to follow Jesus. And they'd put all of their hopes into one person. And now, that person was gone before their very eyes.
- So for the disciples (including these women), imagine how tough it'd be for them - they're not only mourning the death of their Lord and friend Jesus, but they're mourning the death of their hope and future.

And so each second, it must seem like everything around them is getting darker and darker.

And I think this is something that we can relate with - maybe some of us here have been in a similar position before - or maybe we're going through something like this right now - where it feels like your world has been turned upside down.

- Maybe our relationships, career, and finances are breaking apart.
- And we see no way out or no signs of improvement.
- And it feels like hope is disappearing and now blocked by a giant boulder.

Well, in that kind of moment, some of us may be aware - at least - intellectually that the truth is that God is still with us. He will not abandon us. But to be honest, emotionally, it may feel like God is far away.

And as humans, we're emotional beings, aren't we?

- It can be difficult for us to remember what God's Word says when we're feeling down.
 - Now, to be clear, this shouldn't be an excuse for us to ignore what God says when everything seems lost, but this is a reality that Christians can feel sometimes - we can sometimes feel like all is lost...

It's the same thing with these 3 women - their world is spiraling down. It's difficult for them right now to put together what Jesus said, let alone believe in it.

They're falling into a state of discouragement, where now... every little discouraging thing is just adding to their downward spiral.

- And now, when they remember that there's gonna be this boulder blocking their way, this is just another discouraging thing that's causing them to fall deeper and deeper into despair and helplessness.

So really, these women... they're just asking what we all may be thinking when all seems lost, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" / "What can be done?" / "Is there hope?"

These women will find out...

First, the women's expectation. And second...

—

II. The women's discovery (vv. 4-7)

Now, these women actually don't have to wait very long to realize that this day is not gonna go according to their expectations.

Because as they finally reach the location of Jesus' tomb... the first thing they see is that the large stone that was blocking off Jesus' tomb had already been rolled away!

And that must've been so shocking and confusing for them! What could've happened?!

This was the biggest obstacle that they could imagine in their minds. And God has already taken care of it!

- And God has more in store for them...

As the women started to enter the tomb, I imagine them walking into it slowly and cautiously (not exactly sure of what's happening or what will happen).

And not sure if they'll be able to notice it, but there would actually be a second clue here...

- Remember, why were they there in the first place? To anoint Jesus' body with spices, right? In order to reduce the smell of the decomposing body.
- The second clue would be that there's no smell!
 - As they're reaching the inside of the tomb, the only smell was from the spices that they're carrying.

So as they finally reached the inside of the tomb - what do they see?

- Jesus' body is no longer there!

- Instead, they see a young man (sitting on the right side of the tomb) dressed in a white robe! And they're in shock!
 - Just imagine what this might've been like for them - Maybe they thought that they'd seen a ghost!
 - But the other Gospel accounts make it very clear here that what they're seeing here is no ordinary young man, but an angel...
 - A heavenly messenger who's delivering a message from heaven to Earth...

And in the midst of their shock... the angel first gives them words of comfort. And he said, "Do not be alarmed..."

I know you must be in shock, but do not be alarmed...

And then he gives them the good news: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him."

- The angel affirms that they're talking about the same Jesus here - Jesus of Nazareth.
- The angel affirms what happened to Jesus - Yes, this Jesus was indeed crucified and he did die (that actually happened).
- The angel affirms what has now happened to Jesus - this Jesus is no longer dead, but is now alive!

And he then invites the women to look at the physical evidence for themselves - See the place where they laid him.

- Look at where Jesus' body was laid.
- Both Marys had seen Jesus' body laid here in this very place. And now with their own eyes, they see that his body is not there!

(So just as clearly as you all see me here standing in front of you with your own eyes - these women saw just as clearly with their own eyes that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, died, and buried). And now, they clearly see that his body is no longer there!

What does this all point to?

- The evidence points to the amazing truth that Jesus Christ is indeed alive!
- And not only spiritually, but physically... he has resurrected from the dead - just as he told his disciples.

<pause>

Now, what do we think?

- Right now, some of us may be thinking, really? Can this really be true? This sounds either impossible or too good to be true!

- So I want to take some time now to address a few objections that people have had in the past about Jesus' resurrection.
- Some may think: Maybe this story is made up by Jesus' followers!
 - But this is very unlikely - Why? Because who were the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection? 3 women.
 - Back in those days - in the first century AD in the Jewish & Roman world, the witness of a woman was considered to be unreliable in a court of law (unfortunately, they'd just dismiss it as untrustworthy news).
 - Which means that if this story was made up then it wouldn't make sense for them to say that the first witnesses were 3 women...
 - It would've made more sense for them to say that it's 3 men. And why stop at 3? Just say that it was the 11 apostles who were there! Why make up a story of them scattering when Jesus was arrested - that'd be shameful for them. So that's unlikely.
- Now, if they really wanted to disprove Jesus' resurrection (once and for all), all that they had to do was provide a dead body - So that they could say, "Well, you thought Jesus was raised, but look: here's his body!"
 - (But no, they couldn't do that, because the tomb was empty).
- So maybe some would think: Well... Maybe Jesus' body was just moved or stolen?
 - Again, that'd be very unlikely - Mark didn't mention this detail, but there were actually Roman soldiers guarding the tomb (We know this from Matthew's Gospel).
 - The leaders who were against Jesus... they actually thought about the same thing (because even they've heard that Jesus said that in 3 days, he'll rise again), and so they feared that Jesus' disciples would just steal his body and say that he's risen.
 - So they thought of a simple fix: they're gonna have Roman soldiers guard the tomb all day and all night for 3 days.
 - But do you know what happened? According to the Gospel of Matthew - On the third day, there was a violent earthquake, and an angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, rolled back the large stone. And then he sat on it.
 - The guards saw all this, and ran away in fear!
 - That's why by the time these 3 women came, there were no more guards and the stone had been rolled away.
- Now, one last thing to consider - The resurrected Jesus would actually appear physically (in-person) in front of over 500 people.
 - And many of Jesus' disciples in the years to come would be tortured and killed because they wouldn't deny Jesus and his resurrection. So what does that reveal to us about what they believed to be true? Would they be willing to die for something if it's made up? I don't think so.

- Imagine - If you knew that this was actually a lie, would you die for this? What would you gain? It would cost you your life and possibly the lives of your loved ones. So wouldn't it be easier to just go back to being a fisherman?
- No, people will not die for a lie. But they will die for the truth.
 - And the truth is that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead!

Look at verse 7 - the angel now tells the women what they're to do with this truth that they've just received...

He said, "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."

So the angel basically told them, "Go! Tell the others!"

And so we'd expect these women to start running with joy and for them to tell the disciples right away!

But how do they actually respond?

First, the women's expectation. Second, the women's discovery. And third...

—

III. The women's response (v. 8)

Let's look at verse 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."

That's not at all what we'd expect to happen, right? Their reaction sounds more like the other disciples when Jesus was arrested! Not a reaction you'd expect for Jesus' resurrection.

But again, before we judge these women, let's try to put ourselves in their shoes.

- I think their reaction is actually a very natural & raw, human reaction.
- Because remember, they just had a supernatural encounter with a spiritual being - that doesn't happen everyday!

So beforehand, they were already emotionally drained and grieving... and now, add on top of that shock and awe and confusion and fear!

- So I think we should be gracious to them and see that it'd make sense for them to be emotionally overwhelmed at this time.

And they're not sure what just happened... "Was that an angel? What happened to Jesus' body? What should I believe? What should I do?"

- All these thoughts and questions may be in their minds.

And so they're basically paralyzed... And as they're heading back, they said nothing to anyone - which implies that they also didn't say anything even to one another...

- It's a different kind of picture of what we saw previously.
 - Because on the way to the tomb, they were still speaking among themselves, and asking "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"
 - And now, they're completely silent, not speaking to anyone and to each other.

<pause>

It's so interesting that this is what Mark highlights about the women's response. It really makes you think and reflect, right? Why is Mark highlighting such raw emotions and fear here? Especially in this moment when he's writing about Jesus' resurrection that should be joyful, right?

So let's think about it now... What Mark is highlighting here is that the best news in the entire history of the entire world was first perceived with fear and shock.

- Now what does that tell us?

I believe that this shows us that hope doesn't always feel like hope at first.

And in a way, I think this is encouraging for us...

<pause>

Because for some of us here, we may already know that the tomb is empty, we've heard the Good News before - we believe in it, and maybe we've even shared the Good News to others. But if we're honest, sometimes... we still feel afraid...

- Sometimes our hearts are still overwhelmed with anxiety at work (or at home with family)...
- Sometimes our relationships are still strained and we feel alone...
- Sometimes our future still feels uncertain...
- And sometimes, we feel like we're barely holding it together...

Maybe we're like these women... We know that the tomb is empty, but that feeling of peace and joy hasn't caught up with us yet.

So the question is: What do we do when we feel like that? What do we do when we're spiraling down, and - even after we've heard the Good News - fear is still holding on to us?

<pause>

Well, let's see what God's Word has to say to us about this. Let's consider these 3 women... Did they continue to be overwhelmed in fear? Or did their fear finally turn to joy?

Matthew's Gospel actually tells us what happens next...

Matthew 28:8 (NIV)

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples

Isn't that amazing? So they did initially react with fear and overwhelm...

- but notice how over time, their fear (it's still there), but it's now mixed with joy.
- And then eventually, joy took over and that's what moved them to action, and they ended up sharing the Good News to the disciples! (and maybe they're smiling again for the first time in 3 days!)

<pause>

So now the question for us is really... What happened? How'd these women get from fear to joy? (We want that too!)

I think we're actually already been given a glimpse of their turning point.

Because what did the angel say to them? (specifically, at the end) - He said, "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."

That's key... Just as he told you!

As they're heading back, this message is probably just replaying in their minds over and over and over again.

- And finally... they remember to go back to what Jesus already told them! *"I will die, I will rise again in 3 days, I will meet you in Galilee."*
- And Jesus' words broke their downward spiral!

And it must've clicked for them. Beforehand, they're just focusing on every little discouragement, and now they're focusing on every little thing Jesus said... And they remember...

- Jesus is Lord - He's completely in control of everything!
 - And even in this moment - that may feel out of control for us - Jesus is still in control!
- And if everything has happened exactly as he says it would, then that means that Jesus is truly who he says he is.
- And if Jesus is truly Lord, and Jesus is alive, then this means that hope is not dead; this means that my hope is alive!

And that's why these women can have joy again!

<pause>

Now, friends, what does this mean for us, today?

- This means that when fear seizes us, we're also to go back to what Jesus has already told us.
- And we're to remember that Jesus is Lord.

<pause>

Now, one question we didn't ask yet is: What was the point of it all? If Jesus is Lord and already knew - in advance - that he'll be betrayed and crucified, why did he allow these things to happen?

Again, let's go back to what he already told us...

Matthew 20:28 (ESV)

"the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus died to give his life for the sake of his people.

Because more than us needing to be saved from a tough job, or a tough conflict, or a tough situation... we need to be saved from our sins.

Because we're all sinners - we've all disobeyed and sinned against God (I think even if you're not a believer, we can at least admit that none of us are perfect).

But here's the thing... The consequences of our sins... They won't only affect our lives now (and they definitely can affect our lives now because our sins can destroy relationships and cause conflict now), but ultimately... The consequence of our sins is eternal punishment in Hell (a far scarier reality than just physical death).

- And if there's something that we should be rightfully afraid of - it's God's judgment on our sins.

<pause>

But God - in His grace and mercy - decided to take on our punishment Himself...

So even though Jesus knew that he'd be betrayed, humiliated, and crucified... he still went through those things. Why? Because he wanted to save his beloved people from eternity in Hell.

- That's what our Lord is like... He looks at us, and says "No, don't punish them, I'll take their punishment instead."
 - This is the kind of sacrificial love that our Lord has for his people.

If not for Jesus' sacrifice - then Simon Peter, Mary Magdalene, Mary, Salome, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, you, and me... we'd all be heading to Hell.

- We'd have no hope...

But the Good News is that - because of Jesus - ANYONE who believes in him as Lord and Savior will not perish, but will have eternal life in Heaven!

So, friends, if you've not yet put your faith in Christ, I'm really glad you're here. Please don't feel discouraged if this hope doesn't feel like hope right away. But please be aware that the reason why it may not yet feel like hope for you is because you'll first need to confront the reality that you're a sinner in need of forgiveness.

- But the more that you see that you need forgiveness, the more beautiful Jesus will look in your eyes...
- So I'd like to personally invite you to continue attending our church even after Easter, and please come talk to me or others around you - we'd love to help you know more about who Jesus is.

And it's ok if you still have many questions.

Actually, one of the questions you may have is: How do we know that - because of Jesus - our sins are truly forgiven?

That'd be a great question, and that's actually what the Resurrection assures us of.

- Jesus' resurrection proves and assures us that he is who he says he is, and that our sins are truly forgiven.

Let's consider what Apostle Paul said in...

1 Corinthians 15:13-14 (ESV)

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Basically, if Jesus had remained dead, then we can have no assurance of future resurrection even for ourselves.

- Because how can we then have faith in what Jesus said if he remained dead?
 - Our faith would be in vain.
- But because Jesus is truly risen, we have proof and can have great assurance that...
 - Jesus is truly Lord
 - Our sins are truly forgiven
 - And we will have eternal life

And if we can truly trust what Jesus said about his death and resurrection, then this means that we can truly trust in everything else that Jesus has said.

- And the one who said that "I will rise again" also said...
 - "Take heart, I have overcome the world."
 - "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

- And Jesus said, “I am with you always.”
 - Always...
 - That means even when you’re down and when you’re barely hanging on... Jesus is there with you...

And, brothers and sisters, when we go back to what Jesus said... we’re not just going back to a book... Ultimately, we go back to **Jesus himself**.

Because in our moments of fear and trembling, who we ultimately need is a person...

- We need Jesus - who doesn’t roll his eyes at our panic, but who meets us even in the middle of our fears.
 - Our fears may still be there, but you know what? Jesus is also there amidst the fear...

And even when it seems like all is lost, looking to Jesus will remind us that there’s more to life than the present discouragements that we see before us.

- Jesus’ resurrection actually reminds us that what we should really hope in is - not ultimately in this life - but in the resurrection life to come.

Conclusion

- I believe this is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer was able to do.
 - He was able to see his life - not merely in light of the next day, next week, next month, or next year... But in light of eternity.
- And his present fears were also seen in light of the eternal hope that he has in Jesus Christ.
- And so he probably still felt a bit of fear - but even amidst his fears, he’s able to have hope... Because what comes after death is not unknown or a mystery to him.
 - He knows exactly what will happen because Jesus - his Lord and Savior - has died for him.
 - And what’s awaiting him is eternal life in Heaven where he’ll be face-to-face with his risen King and where he’ll be with his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ forever.
 - This is why - before his execution - he was able to say, “Jesus is alive. I have hope.”

And this is also why - amidst our fears - and even when all seems lost, we can also say, “Jesus is alive, we have hope.”

Let’s pray.