

Text: Mark 16:1-7

Title: “You Doubt?”

Introduction: Happy Easter Everybody! Happy Resurrection Day Everybody!

Okay, here is the problem. It’s Easter again. This is my 12th Easter that I’ve been the pastor here at BMZ. That means that this is my 12th time telling the same story to some of the same people I’ve told it to for 12 years. The question is: is there anything new about the story? Answer: No!

The story is the same, but the result of the story has been changing individual’s lives and eternities for centuries! This same story has been giving new hope to people throughout history who thought that there was no hope. This story of a resurrected Jesus has brought about the same doubts in people’s minds for 2,000 years and at the same time become reality in people’s lives for those same 2,000 years!

Okay, so, here’s the main problem. If we were having a funeral here today of a person that you knew had been dead since Friday, and that person came back to life during the funeral, who would be the first person you would tell? Do you think that you could convince them that it was true? What questions would they have and how would you answer them?

That’s where we are headed today and because that’s where we are headed today, I think we had better start with prayer! **Let’s Pray!**

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will see a brief outline that will guide us through this Scripture. Please grab a pen and fill in the blanks on that outline. Also, write in between the blanks things that are said or seen that might help you in your faith journey or the faith/life journey of someone you know. Take this home and hang it where you can see it so that you will read over it again this week. We have to stay in touch with God to get to know God. For those of you who are listening on line or IPODing, you too can download the outline off of our website and fill in the blanks! We are glad you are with us whenever you decide to listen to this.

Over the past few weeks we have been studying the last 24 Hours of Jesus’ life. In order to understand what we believe as Christians or Followers of Christ, we have to know the last day before Jesus’ crucifixion. In order to know what we believe we have to know what happened, why it happened, how it happened and how Jesus responded. That’s what we continue to look at today!

Before we go forward, let’s back up a little bit. In our previous episode— Let’s go back to the Friday after the Passover Feast; the Friday before the Passover Sabbath...

Read Mark 15:42-47?

I. First Day

- A. As a recap, Jesus died around 3pm on Friday. The Jewish Sabbath would start about 3 hours later at sunset. At that time, Jewish people were not to touch or care for the dead ... the followers of Jesus were in a time-crunch.

- B. Two hours before sunset, Jesus and the two thieves were taken down from their crosses. Joseph risked approaching Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Jewish High Council / Sanhedrin that accused Jesus falsely to have him crucified.
1. Joseph was a closet follower of Jesus.
 2. He was wealthy and powerful.
 3. Luke describes Joseph as a good and righteous man.
- C. Joseph risked himself and his cover as a follower of Jesus by asking for Jesus' dead body. Up until this point, he had kept his loyalty to Jesus hidden.
1. Like many people I know ... they will not claim out loud to be followers of Jesus because of what might be said of them or how they might be treated.
 2. Joseph was wealthy and powerful and respected. What could have happened if he had claimed to be a disciple of Jesus?
 3. I wonder how Joseph might have influenced others had he claimed Jesus out loud?!? Would others have been willing to follow Jesus too?
- D. Through the Book of John and the other Gospel accounts, we find that Joseph, Nicodemus (another member of the Jewish High Council), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were the ones who buried Jesus before sunset on Friday (Sabbath started at sunset).
- E. Now, as other Jews celebrated the Passover Sabbath starting at sunset, imagine the shock, pain and disappointment the followers of Jesus must have been experiencing that night.
- F. That was the 1st Day.

II. Second Day

- A. That Saturday, we really don't have an account of what happened with the disciples, but we do know a couple of things that were going on between the burial on Friday and where the writers pick up the story again on Sunday morning...
1. We know by Matthew's writing that Pilate set guards at the tomb where Jesus was buried, because the Pharisees had told him that Jesus said something about coming back from the dead. They were worried that the disciples might take Jesus body out of the tomb and claim that He was alive.
 2. According to John, we know that on Sunday morning, the disciples had locked themselves into a house (Upper Room) for fear that they might be arrested for being followers of Jesus. Chances are the if they were locked in there on Sunday morning, they had been locked in there since Friday night. They were scared!
- B. Even though we don't have written proof of what the disciples did in those 36ish hours, can you even imagine what they were going through?

- C. After being the closest of friends with Jesus and being with Him for all the miracles and great teachings and life-changing experiences ... imagine the guilt they were feeling.
1. Certainly they felt the fear of being found and arrested, but there was much more...
 2. Imagine the guilt. Judas was not the only one that had betrayed Jesus in those last 24 hours of his life.
 3. Peter had denied Jesus just like Jesus said he would.
 4. They had all deserted Jesus in his hours of suffering.
 5. John was the only one who stood by the cross ... the others, it is believed, watched from a distance.
 6. None of them were there for Jesus' burial.
- D. These were men who had left everything to follow Jesus. They had experienced Jesus to be God with them. They had seen goodness and love and mercy and grace lived out!
- E. They hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah that would defeat their political enemies ... and now He was gone; just gone. Their King had been defeated by the Roman soldiers and the Jewish religious leaders. All of their hopes and dreams ... their faith, had died with Him.
- F. This moment reminds me of all of the families I have sat with when they lost a loved one. Maybe a child or younger person who should not be gone yet ... Loss of hopes and dreams and often, faith...
- G. It's the 2nd Day. This is when we start to get past the shock and the real pain starts to sink in. What has happened becomes more of a reality ... loss of a loved one, a medical diagnosis, a lawsuit or 9/12. It's the day that we realize that our lives will never be the same again. That's what the Disciples were going through...
- H. Can you imagine the conversation?
1. "Didn't He say something about tearing down the Temple and rebuilding it in three days? Was he talking about himself?" "Yeah, right; if he had that power he wouldn't have died in the first place!"
 2. "I remember him saying something about the Son of Man had to be put to death, but would come back to life!" "I kind of remember that, but he couldn't have meant it like that..."
- I. What about Jesus? Where was Jesus during those 36ish hours? Some speculate that He descended into Hell and showed His power by inviting some to follow Him and they were released from Hell. Some say that he went face-to-face with Satan and let him know Who's boss. We don't know for sure ... we can ask Jesus later.
- J. What we do know is that this was a time, between the crucifixion and the resurrection, of hopelessness for those who had put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah.

The end of the 2nd Day/Sabbath actually happened at sundown on Saturday. But, we pick up the story on Sunday at dawn. Mary Magdalene (who had been healed by Jesus) went out to the tomb with one or two other women. Here's what Mark says happens... (Mark 16:1-7)

III. Third Day

Now, remember we have 4 accounts of what happened on that 1st Easter morning. Remember 4 different people writing from different perspectives and backgrounds trying to get the meaning across to different audiences...

A. The Faith of the Women

1. It's funny how the women are already on their way to the tomb when they realize that over the tomb opening is a BIG STONE ... How we going to move it?
 - a. Those women knew that the stone would be way too heavy for them to move, but they kept going.
 - b. How many of us would have said, "Oh, Big Stone. Not going to be able to move it. I might as well go home!"
 - c. They kept going. They were focused on Jesus, not on the obstacles between them and Jesus.
 - d. I wonder what we could learn from that?
2. Here's the obstacle they didn't know. Pilate had the tomb Sealed with a Roman Seal! Breaking a Roman seal was punishable by torture or death.
3. BUT, even with obstacles they did know about and didn't know about, those women were determined to serve Jesus (burial cleaning and preservation).
4. I wonder how many times we turn back when if we had continued to do what we know God wants us to do we would find that the tomb stone was already rolled away, the seal broken and the Roman guards gone!?
5. The angel tells the women that Jesus is gone and that He still plans on meeting the disciples in Galilee.

B. Unbelievable

1. The writers of the Gospels have four different accounts of what happened after the women found the tomb open and Jesus body gone, but one thing they have in common ... UNBELIEVABLE!
2. Mark says that the women were too frightened to say anything about what they saw to anyone.
3. In Matthew even when the disciples saw Jesus with their own eyes, they still had doubts if it was really him.
4. In Luke, the disciples did not believe what Mary told them. Even when Peter and John went to the empty tomb, they did not quite understand what happened.

C. Struggling with Doubt

1. Just like we do every Easter ... the disciples heard Mary tell the story and responded with, "It can't be! We watched him die and we know he was buried. People don't just come back to life!"
2. Isn't that us? Unless I see it with my own eyes, I will not believe! People don't just come back from the dead!
3. But, you know what we know? There is evidence that there was resurrection by the disciple's reaction.
4. Have you ever been to a sporting event and you had to go to the bathroom? And while you are in the bathroom ... you're not sure what happened, but something happened because of the reaction of the crowd?!?
5. That's how we know something happened that was probably just like Jesus coming back to life!!

D. No Doubt

1. Remember how the disciples were in hiding because they were scared? That changed!
2. We are told that over a 40 day period after that first Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to hundreds of people – including the Disciples numerous times!
3. After those 40 days and after Jesus sent the gift of the Spirit, those disciples weren't scared anymore!
4. All 11+1 of those disciples put their lives on the line for their belief in Jesus coming back to life like He promised.
5. They told EVERYBODY about Jesus being the way to God for eternity ... forgiveness of sins, promise of eternity in God's Paradise, etc. No Fear!
6. All of those disciples except ONE died for their faith ... by some sort of execution. They could have turned back and quit talking about Jesus, BUT, SOMETHING HAPPENED!

IV. Life After Death

- A. Here's the problem: most of us can't believe that there is another life after our death because we haven't been dead before. "I'm not going to believe it until I see it with my own eyes!" Well, then it's too late.
- B. There are a lot of things that I am told are true that seem absolutely absurd to me. Like, when it comes to physics.
 1. Did everything in the universe actually spring from an initial mass the size of a pinhead?
 2. You'd have to be a 'pinhead' to believe that, wouldn't you?
 3. Is my body really made up of atoms, each of which includes a nucleus surrounded by an electron cloud with constantly moving charged particles? I don't really understand it, but I trust it to be true. Why? There is evidence.
 4. If we believe these things, why not life after death?!?

- C. My Mom died almost 14 years ago of brain cancer. Right before she slipped into a coma, my Mom, who was in her right mind asked my Dad and me, "Do you hear them? Can you hear that out the window? It's angel's wings... they are coming."
- D. My Dad died when he was 17 of a burst appendix. I was born when my Dad was 35 years old!
 - 1. When my Dad was declared dead on the table in Cone Hospital in Greensboro NC, the doctors used him as a testing dummy and pumped him full of drugs to try to revive him.
 - 2. When they knew that it was absolutely hopeless they put his insides back in him haphazardly and sewed him up.
 - 3. During this time my Dad said that he could see the doctors working on him from the top of the room. He could hear the voices of the doctors and nurses and his parents.
 - 4. About an hour after the medical team had left the room, a nurse, who had gone back into the surgery room to start cleaning up screamed! Guess why?
 - 5. Connect the dots ... here I am!
- E. Guess what I believe?!? I believe that there is more to this life and death thing than you and I will ever understand.
- F. I also believe that Jesus of Nazareth came back to life on the 3rd Day and met with his disciples and ate with them and walked with them and fished with them and taught them.

V. It's Real!

- A. Listen; don't be fooled this Easter by your doubts.
- B. Because, if you're right and I'm wrong about Jesus coming back to life and offering us eternity in God's Kingdom, I'm still good and loving this life. BUT, if I'm right and you're wrong, you are probably somewhat miserable in this life and eternity is a long time!
- C. Maybe this will help ...??????????