**Uniquely Jesus**  August 20, 17

Mark 16, Part Four

**Coffee/Question:** What kind of news gets your attention? What kind of news do you typically pass on to your family, friends or acquaintances?

Read Mark 16:6-7.

How the angel spoke of Jesus is hugely significant.

He called Jesus… *“the Nazarene.”*

And then he added... *“who was crucified.”*

In speaking of Jesus as “the Nazarene,” was the angel simply referencing where Jesus had spent his childhood and teen years... in Nazareth?

If that was the case, why didn’t he speak of Jesus as “the Bethlehem-ite” - referring to where he had been born?

Or of Jesus “the Egyptian” – that’s where he had lived as a toddler and young child?

Or of Jesus “the Capernaumite” - where he had lived as a young adult until he began his public ministry? http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Nazarene.html#.WZNFkVGGPyQ

In John 1:45, after Jesus had invited Philip to follow him, Philip went to his friend Nathaniel and told him that Jesus of Nazareth was “the one” of whom the prophets had written.

Here’s where it gets interesting.

There are no specific prophecies that refer to the Messiah as being from Nazareth.

The closest thing is a prophecy in Isaiah 9:1: *Nevertheless there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan...*

So, what did Philip mean?

You should also know that Matthew in 2:23 made a similar claim:

*“...he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.”*

What was Philip and Matthew referring to?

Isaiah the prophet wrote in 11:1: *“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots* ***a Branch*** *will bear fruit.”*

Jeremiah used this same title in 23:5: *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up from David’s line* ***a righteous Branch****.”*

He used this phrase again in 33:15: *“In those days and at that time I will make* ***a righteous Branch*** *sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land.”*

The prophet Zechariah also used this title, 3:8: *“Listen high priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant,* ***the Branch****.”*

The Messianic title, “the Branch,” is a word, that is similar sounding in Hebrew to the word “Nazarene.”

I believe what Philip and Matthew were referring to... were these prophecies, found in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah.

I also believe the angel at the tomb, deliberately used that title, “the Nazarene,” but not just to reference where Jesus was from, Nazareth.

The angel reminded the women, that Jesus’ crucifixion did not negate who he was - he was the Nazarene; the Branch; God’s Messiah.

There is something very significant here I want to make sure you see and understand.

In the time of Jesus, people from Nazareth were looked down upon.

When Philip told Nathaniel about Jesus of Nazareth, Philip said: *“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”*  John 1:46.

Many in that day and time thought like Nathaniel. But why?

Adam Hamilton writes: *“Nazareth is not among the sixty-three villages of Galilee mentioned in the Hebrew Talmud or the forty-five mentioned by first-century Jewish historian Josephus, who knew the area well. [Nazareth] was an insignificant little town.”*

http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1469/why-nazareth

In addition to its size, Nazareth’s people and culture were considered primitive.

How those outside of Nazareth, looked down at people from Nazareth, is a practice that happens all the time, in every generation.

It is in our human nature to rank - to want to place others lower than one’s self - for any number of reasons - skin color; accent; where a person lives; etc.

ie. on the plane from Fort St. John with hillbillies from Kentucky

What does this say to us about who God is, that when he chose where Jesus’ parents would come from…he chose Mary and Joseph of Nazareth… a place of obscurity.

And when the choice was made as to where Jesus would live his childhood and teen years… it was Nazareth... among a people considered backwards.

Philippians 2:7 says about Jesus, *“he made himself nothing.”*

Why did Jesus share in our humanity… in this way? Hebrews 2:14

In all aspects of his life –Jesus experienced what we experience – the good, the bad and the ugly.

The fact that Jesus came from Nazareth is one of the reasons why people, like Nathaniel, looked at Jesus with contempt - “can anything good come from there?”

But there was another reason.

The angel spoke of it – Jesus was… crucified.

Every Jewish person believed the Messiah would be a victorious, conquering warrior - that’s what the prophecies all said.

Look again at **Isaiah 11** - v.2-5.

There were several passages in the OT that spoke of a suffering servant - Psalm 22;

Isaiah 53.

But these were regarded as difficult passages... to interpret...to understand.

They were there in the Scriptures; but were not integrated into the Jewish hope of who Messiah would be and what he would do.

For example - look at **Psalm 22.**

“Who” is it that is speaking in this psalm?

This was a question much debated.

When Jesus died, in the minds of his followers, his death meant, that though he was convincing in his teaching and miracles, he couldn’t have been who he had claimed to be.

This is what crushed their spirit; what pulled them deep into despair.

Luke 24:21: *“...we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel...”*

This was the intense grief they lived with... until Easter morning.

When the angel spoke of Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified, he wasn’t suggesting that God’s Messiah would not be a conquering King.

What the angel made known is that Jesus first had to be a suffering servant.

This was the message of **Isaiah 53:1-10a.**

Now look at **Isaiah 52:13-15**; **Isaiah 53:10b-12.**

It was all there – suffering and glory.

Jesus had spoken of this with his followers.

He had told them, again and again*, “The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”* Mark 10:33-34.

It wasn’t that they lacked facts.

Their difficulty was reconciling what they had grown up believing about the Messiah... with what Jesus told them.

After his resurrection, when Jesus appeared to his followers in the room where they had been staying, he said to them:

*“This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”* Luke 24:44

Hearing Jesus state the facts again… wasn’t enough.

They still didn’t get it.

What Jesus did next shows his goodness and kindness.

Luke 24:45 says, *“He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”*

It was not enough for them to be told by Jesus it **would** happen; nor was it enough for the angel to tell them that it **had** happened.

It was not even enough for them **to see** the risen Jesus, and have him tell it to them…again.

Their minds had to be opened by Jesus in order to understand the Scriptures.

What Jesus did then is what he continues to do.

He opens the heart and mind of a person to understand.

2 Corinthians 4:6.

*“...For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”*

The angel spoke of, “Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.”

But the angel had not come just to commiserate with them in their sorrow.

He had come to share with them good news.

The angel announced, “He is not here,” pointing to where the body of Jesus had been.

Jesus was not there because, “He has risen,” said the angel.

When his followers saw him later that day, in order to convince them that he was not a ghost, Jesus said to them, *“Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see,*

*a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”* Luke 24:39.

The resurrected body of Jesus bore the scars of his crucifixion - of the nails that had been put into his hands and feet, and of the spear that had been thrust into his side.

That’s why Jesus told his followers - look at my hands and feet.

When Jesus returned to his Father’s home, it was his crucified, resurrected, glorified body that ascended. How do we know this?

Because of the theme, in Revelation 4-7, of the songs of praise, sung by the elders, the four living creatures, the angels and the redeemed.

The apostle John, in a vision, had one of the elders of heaven say to him, *“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered.”*

John then looked to see the Lion and wrote: *“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne...”*

As John continued to watch and listen, he heard all of heaven sing this song:

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain...with your blood you purchased for God… men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation...”*

It is not just a handful who will be ransomed by Jesus.

When John looked at those who sang, he saw a great multitude... of men and women... that no one could count... from every nation, tribe, people and language - Revelation 7:9.

Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb.

He is the Nazarene – the crucified Messiah; who... in his own words, is, *“… the Living One; [who] was dead, and now [is]… alive forever and ever...”* Revelation 1:18.

In Tim Keller’s words, *“The news of the resurrection...is the hinge upon which the story of the world pivots.”* King’s Cross, p.221.

Let’s make several connections to our lives.

The first is obvious.

\*\*\*\* This news regarding Jesus’ resurrection is news that cannot be kept secret; it has to be shared with everyone.

We’ve heard this before. But listen to it again.

The angel said to the women, *“Go!” “Go tell his disciples” “Go tell Peter.”*

Jesus’ last words to his followers were, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations.”* Mark 16:15.

The sharing of this good news, is not something optional, which Jesus’ followers can choose to be a part of or not.

Jesus commands us to go and tell… the world.

But…. there is a peculiar feature to this news.

Paul told the church at Corinth, *“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing...”* 1 Corinthians 1:18

So why would Jesus want us to share news that is considered foolish?

Because in this news, of Christ crucified and raised to life, the power and the wisdom of God is made known - 1 Corinthians 1:24.

This news regarding Jesus brings salvation to everyone who believes it - Romans 1:16.

As Paul said to the Corinthians, a person’s faith in Jesus does not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power - 1 Corinthians 2:5.

Christianity is news of Jesus the Savior who lived, died, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and now rules from heaven over the earth.

The same power which raised Jesus back to live, is used to bring alive spiritually dead people when they trust in Jesus.

Remember: Christianity is not about a moral code to follow; but a supernatural life to live.

When Jesus first appeared to his followers, he identified himself by his scars.

\*\*\*\* Have you ever wondered why Jesus kept those scars?

If everything is to be made new, and Jesus is the prototype, the first-fruit, the trailblazer... of the new creation, why would he keep the reminder of what had been?

With Jesus, what seemed to be a tragedy was turned by God into glory.

The scars in Jesus’ hands and feet.. are and will be... a forever reminder of what it took for him to ransom, rescue and restore us.

What is true of Jesus will be true of us.

Philip Yancey writes: *“Because of [the resurrection we have] hope that the tears we shed, the blows we receive, the emotional pain [we endure], the heartache [we experience] over lost friends and loved ones...will become memories, like Jesus’ scars....”*

The Jesus I Never Knew, p.219.

If we will press into Jesus, in whatever we are facing, no matter how tragic, how trying, how disappointing – and hold onto him… when we see Jesus’ face, what has caused such pain and heartache and grief - will become but a memory.

In the time of the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. (Revelation 21) Everything will be renewed. (Matthew 19)

And like Jesus, you and I, too, will have our scars that will testify to God’s great goodness, of when he made all things right.

But ours is not just a faith about the sweet by and by.

Jesus’ resurrection is also the source of our hope for life here and now.

\*\*\*\* Hebrews 12:2 says: *“For the joy set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame...”*

Jesus’ accusers and those who put him to death sought to shame him.

But Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus scorned the shame of the cross.

Do you know what that means - to scorn?

Dictionary definition - Scorn: the belief that something is worthless.

The cross and its shame did not define who Jesus is.

It held no power over him.

Jesus was not hung on the cross because he was worthless, or powerless.

He viewed the cross as the surprising and unexpected means by which God’s grace and mercy would be released into the world.

This is why he willingly laid himself down on the cross; and why, though he could have come down; he remained on the cross, and endured all that happened to him.

Jesus saw… that his death was not a defeat; nor hell’s victory.

He knew his sacrifice and death was heaven’s invasion of earth.

It was God’s beginning, in this present time... to undo all that sin and death had ruined.

Keeping this in mind, listen to Tim Keller’s question:

*“Why is it so hard to face suffering? Why is it so [difficult] to face disability and disease? Why is it so [challenging] to do the right thing if you know it’s going to cost you money, reputation, maybe even your life?*

*Why is it so [wrenching] to face your own death or the death of loved ones?*

*It is hard because we think [and then act as if] this broken world is the only world we’re ever going to have.” King’s Cross, p.222 “But [it isn’t]… and your body is not the only body; and your life is not the only life you are going to have....”* King’s Cross, p.224

Jesus’ resurrection frees you and I, in this present time, to be brave; to take risks for Jesus and the gospel.

We talked last week that when we notice people or opportunities, that is God, in love, showing us what he is doing because he wants us to join him.

This announcement by the angel – “he has risen” - takes us a step further.

When we join Jesus, we can eagerly and gratefully spend our lives for him, and on his cause, and not feel, as we do so, that we might be missing out on some experiences or opportunities.

Jesus said, *“...at the renewal of all things...everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”* Matthew 19:28-29.

Jim Elliott said it this way: *he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*

This confidence in God is expressed through two of our guiding principles.

We purpose to be a people of big faith because we follow a big God.

We will go wherever Jesus leads us and step into opportunities he leads us into, because we know he delights to do the impossible through unlikely means and people.

We know these things to be true of our God because of the resurrection of Jesus.

And so, we live in response to his mighty power.

**The Blessing**

1 Peter 1:13

Jesus had not died because of health complications.

He had not died in an unfortunate accident.

Jesus had been crucified.

[**NEWSWEEK SPECIAL EDITION**](http://www.newsweek.com/authors/newsweek-special-edition) ON 4/4/15 AT 4:39 PM

HOW THE ROMANS USED CRUCIFIXION—INCLUDING JESUS'—AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

Jesus stood accused of sedition, not blasphemy—a civil crime, not a religious one. Rome’s punishment was a painful, and visible, death by crucifixion. In the age of Roman domination, only Rome crucified. And they did it often. The [word ‘thieves,’ used to describe the] two men who were killed along with Jesus ...can also mean “insurgents,” supporting the idea that crucifixion was a political weapon used to send a message to those still living: Do not stir dissent or this will be the result.... Jeremy Ward, head of the physiology department at King’s College London, says, “Crucifixion was a method of torture—not just putting to death. It was a particularly cruel and unusual form of disposing of people.”

When God visited this earth in the person of Jesus, we didn’t just ignore him; or reject him; we tortured him and put him to death in the most cruel way.

It’s true, the specific culpability for Jesus’ death belonged to Pilate, the religious leaders and the mob they stirred up, as well as the Roman soldiers. But just as Adam and Eve acted on behalf of us all, so did these who put Jesus to death.

**Susan Perlman** writes:

“Jesus was not an unwilling victim... He had previously shown a supernatural power to escape from the clutches of grasping men by walking through crowds unnoticed ([**John 8:59**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.59)). Certainly, he could have exited Jerusalem and avoided capture, yet it was Jesus who said of his life, “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.” ([**John 10:18**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2010.18))...

Jesus willed his own crucifixion as necessary to his mission to atone for the sins of all humankind...

If we accept that Jesus was the one of whom Isaiah wrote, and that his death was part of God’s plan to redeem us, then the blame for his death dissolves in the realization that all of our wrongdoing can be absolved by it.”

https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/issues-v15-n03/guilty-or-not-guilty-the-passion-collective-guilt-and-choice/

Isaiah looking ahead to when the Messiah would live on the earth, wrote, *“he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”* Isaiah 53

This was how it had to be.

Sin and death could not be undone any other way.

The message of the young man was not just for the women.

He told them, “Go, tell his disciples.”

This was news to be shared; not news to be held onto.

Only Mark includes an additional phrase, “…and Peter.”

Remember who Mark’s source of information was!

It was Peter.

And the fact that the young man had said, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter,” is a detail Peter never forgot.

Is there anything else?

The young man said, “You will see him, just as he told you.”

The “him” the young man referred to was Jesus.

And that phrase, “just as he told you,” tells us that Jesus’ resurrection was not “new” news.

Jesus had spoken to his followers of this – that he would rise from the dead - and he had done so often.

But not one of them had understood.

This news, left the women, trembling and bewildered.