**Uniquely Jesus**  August 27, 17

Mark 16, Part Five

Today we finish our study in the gospel of Mark.

There are several final points from chapter 16 that we must look into.

I want to assure you that these emphases are not like a convention’s final hours, where the really interesting stuff has already happened and all that’s left to deal with is the boring stuff, and you’re tempted to leave early.

Not that I’ve ever done that :)

We don’t want leave early from Mark’s gospel.

These last points are very important.

Read Mark 16:6-7.

Coffee/Question

**Why do you think the angel specifically mentioned Peter?**

v.7 - “But go, tell his disciples and Peter...”

Feedback

Even after spending 3 ½ years with Jesus, there remained in Peter a huge flaw.

Jesus had tried to speak to him about it - at the supper table and in the Garden.

But Peter brushed off what Jesus said to him.

Peter had an overly inflated view of himself.

He considered himself as being beyond failure.

In Peter’s estimation, the others might desert Jesus, but he never would!

If Peter was going to be useful to Jesus, his sinful pride had to be brought out into the open... so Peter could see just how ugly and repulsive it was.

And so, in love, Jesus allowed Peter to experience where his pride would take him.

If there had been another way for Peter’s pride to be exposed and deal with, Jesus would have utilized it.

But there wasn’t.

Peter followed those who had arrested Jesus.... right into the courtyard of the high priest. It was there, in that courtyard, that Peter was asked three times, if he was one of Jesus’ disciples.

No sooner were the words out of his mouth for the third time, *“I don’t know the man,”* that the rooster crowed, and Jesus, as he was brought out of the room where he had been interrogated, Luke 22:61, *“… turned and looked straight at Peter.”*

Peter barely managed to get out of the courtyard before he *“broke down and wept bitterly.”* Mark 14:72; Matthew 26:75.

I’m certain, in his mind, Peter played over and over, the look Jesus gave to him...

when he heard Peter, deny with curses, that he knew Jesus.

Remember…Peter did what he did, even though he believed in Jesus.

 Mark 8:29: *“Who do you say I am? Peter answered,*

 *‘You are the Christ.’”*

The Bible contains many other stories of people, who followed Jesus, and who like Peter... failed Jesus.

Even after we begin to follow Jesus, we can sin big.

The angel said to the women:

**“Go, tell his disciples...and Peter...that he has risen; that you will see him.”**

Jesus wanted Peter to know that he had not written him off.

If salvation depended on us, we could lose it.

But our salvation is of God.

 Ephesians 2:8-9: “*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this: it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a*

 *reward for the good things we have done.” NLT*

God promises that what he begins in us, he will finish.

 Philippians 1:6: *“...[we] are confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

How does God do this?

Those who are justified by God (that is, declared innocent) are given the Holy Spirit who lives within them in order to make them in practice what God has declared them to be.

How many times have you wished that the Holy Spirit would just “zap” away those old sin habits that plague you?

And sometimes he does remove them.

But normally, the transformation of our lives, is a collaborative effort between God’s Spirit and ourselves; as we learn to say yes to him and no to the desires of old sin habits, accessing forgiveness and the help of the Holy Spirit as we do so.

 Philippians 2:12-13: *“...work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you...”*

This work of the Spirit with us, is a life-long process, that will not be finished until we see Jesus face to face - at our death or at his return.

Back to Peter.

He was forgiven.

Even more significant, he was reinstated.

Peter’s restoration wasn’t easy, nor was it immediate.

In fact, it was very painful for Peter - it hurt him deeply - John 21:17.

Just as Peter had denied Jesus three times, so Jesus questioned Peter three times, *“Do you love me?”*

The grace of God that forgives our sin, and then restores and reinstates, doesn’t “sweep stuff under the carpet.”

The Holy Spirit intends to break in Jesus’ followers, “the power of cancelled sin,”

as the hymn writer wrote.

To that end, when we turn to Jesus for forgiveness, he will thoroughly deal with us.

He will not just address the surface issues, but will uncover and bring into the light, the root issues of our hearts.

I assure you it is painful to be humbled by Jesus.

But I assure you it is infinitely more painful to be left a slave to a particular sin habit and to be devoured by sinful pride.

In those times when we may wonder if our sin is too great; if God could ever give us another chance; if he would still want to name us as his own; if we could ever be

useful to him again, the angel’s message to the women at the tomb, affirms...

 the mercy of God is greater than all of our sin.

There is no more welcome word than God’s assurance to the one who has failed, that he still loves them and intends to finish in them what he began.

Hebrews 12:10-11: *“Our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening - it’s painful. But afterwards, it produces a harvest of right living and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

If you are where Peter once was, I urge you to ask for your Savior’s forgiveness, and to submit to his discipline. Let him deal with you as thoroughly as is needed.

For 3 ½ years, Jesus had often told people, he had healed, or to whom he had revealed himself, to say nothing,

Matthew 8:4 - *See that you don’t tell anyone. (man healed of leprosy)*

Matthew 9:30 - *See that no one knows about this. (two blind men who were healed)*

Matthew 12:15-16 - *...he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was.*

Matthew 17:9 - *Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead. (Peter, James and John)*

Mark 3:12 - *He gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. (those healed)*

Mark 5:43 - *He gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this (that he had raised a dead 12 year old girl back to life)*

Mark 8:30 - *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him (that he was the Christ)*

But in the angel’s announcement, **v.7, “go and tell,”** we see a change of strategy.

Why this change from “don’t tell anyone,” to “go and tell?”

The change was because...Jesus had died and risen.

But isn’t it interesting that when the women disciples were finally told “you can tell,” they initially didn’t – *“they said nothing to anyone…”*

Their reaction is not uncommon.

Where Jesus’ followers are to go - “into the world;”

the news they are to tell - “Jesus is risen;”

and the sheer scope of what they do - “work alongside of and with Jesus...”

can cause them at times to feel overwhelmed; uncertain; bewildered, afraid, etc.

In following Jesus, have you experienced such conflicting emotions?

I have....many times.

***As a missionary leaving for language school in Costa Rica***

 - excited and terrified

***Looking out our apartment window in Caracas.***

 - eager and overwhelmed

***Going to Colombia six times on short mission trips***

 - pumped and fearful

***Arriving in Sooke.***

 - hopeful and apprehensive

Here’s what the follower of Jesus needs to remember with every opportunity given to them by Jesus.

It is normal to be afraid; to feel apprehensive, etc.

But those women who came to the tomb... and the rest of the disciples: did not stay in that place of fear.

So, what happened to them?

What enabled them to move from fear... to courage; from a posture of hiding...

to living in the open?

Acts 4:31: *“...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...”*

There is in every human being a place only God can fill.

When we are born into this world, that place within us... is empty.

As we go through our life, every one of us tries to fill that place, but everything we put there is too small.

However, when a person turns to Jesus, because Jesus has come to them...

their sins are forgiven;

they are born of the Holy Spirit; and

God makes his home in them.

Being born of the Spirit is a one-time event.

But being filled with the Spirit’s life, is not.

Through the book of Acts, we read of Jesus’ followers, being filled with the Spirit, again...and again...and again.

Why the need for fresh infillings of the Spirit?

In our relationship with God there are any number of variables that can diminish the Spirit’s ability... to be at home in us, and to work through our lives.

It’s not that the Holy Spirit leaves a follower of Jesus.

It’s that we, in some way restrict him.

Without God’s Spirit, dealing with those things in us that restrict him, and then filling us again, we will shrink back from what he is calling us to be - the body of Christ - and what he wants us to do - to be world-changers.

I remind all of us here, this is our time to run the race before us; to live for the glory of Jesus.

It is our responsibility and privilege, to pass on the faith to the next generation, whatever the cost.

I believe the weight of living in this manner, falls upon those of us who are more mature in the faith; we’re to lead the way.

We must be found faithful.

Like the song says:

*Letting go of my pride, giving up all my rights
Take this life and let it shine,*

*I lay me down, I'm not my own, I belong to you alone
Hand on my heart this much is true, there's no life apart from you
Lay me down, lay me down*

*It will be my joy to say, your will, your way, always*

The landscape of Canada is riddled with churches that have shriveled and died.

Dig a little into the back stories and you will find a handful of core reasons why...

- first love was lost

- the Bible was ignored or dismissed

- compromises with sin were made and then allowed to continue

- self was put first rather than Jesus

- pride rather than humility energized the ministry done

- the mission of Jesus was subjugated for something else

Regrettably, when this happens, the Holy Spirit is quenched; he is grieved; he is not welcomed and given free reign.

Though a church, in that condition, can carry on for a time, even for years, without the manifest presence and life of the Spirit, it’s members are only playing church, rather than being the church on mission with Jesus.

The book of Revelation tells the stories of churches who started well, but ended poorly.

I don’t want this church to end up like one of those churches.

I don’t want us to drift toward mediocrity; to lose our zeal for Jesus; to become inward focused, and however it happens, to make church about us, instead of the Savior we love and follow.

As we close out our study in Mark, I challenge us to ask God, to deal with anything in us that would restrict his Spirit, and then to ask that he might forgive us and fill us afresh with the Spirit.

I hope this resonates with all of you; that I’m describing the resolve of everyone.

But I know, because we are all subject to ups and down in our walk with Jesus,

that the Holy Spirit may particularly be speaking to some of you; calling you back to your first love.

Do you sense Jesus knocking at the door of your life?

If you do, I urge you to open the door; and to invite him in... that he might again take his rightful place in your life.

Confess to him whatever it is that has led to your heart becoming complacent.

Lay it down. Receive his forgiveness. And let him restore.

On a regular basis everyone of us, needs to be gripped by the glory of God; and to perceive with the eyes of faith our precious Lord Jesus - his beauty, his love, his majesty, his goodness.

Oh God, may the wind of your Spirit blow upon our hearts.

May the theme of our lives be... you will, your way, always.

**The Blessing**

We love him because he first loved us.

It is not out of duty that I’m asking you to spend your lives on Jesus; it’s love.

That was Jesus’ emphasis with Peter when he restored him.

Peter, do you love me????

This is the question Jesus asks when he restores.

The answer of yes, doesn’t end with a warm and fuzzy feeling.

Yes, leads us to join Jesus on his mission; to a purpose worth living and dying for.

**Why the abrupt ending of v.8?**

It wasn’t that the story of Jesus just ended.

We know from Jesus himself that what he started he intended his disciples to carry on.

Mark 13:10 - “...*the gospel must first be preached to all nations.”*

Mark 14:9 - *“...wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world...”*

But when you finish reading v.8, doesn’t it seem like something in missing?

All the other gospel writers have a way better ending.

Matthew - the great commission

Luke - the appearing of Jesus, the eating of food, the touching of his flesh and bones; his ascension.

John - the reinstating of Peter; the statement that if everything Jesus did was written down, the world couldn’t contain the books that would be written.

Why did Mark’s gospel end as it did?

Our Bibles have a footnote that indicate there are two extra endings.

The shorter one: *Then they quickly reported all these instructions to those around Peter. After this, Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.*

NT. Wright says, *“The shorter ending is quite unlike Mark’s style. It is grandiose and formal.”* Mark for Everyone, p.225.

The longer ending is prefaced by this note: *The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9-20.*

Again I quote from Tom Wright: *“The longer ending looks very much like a compilation of bits and pieces from the resurrection narratives of Matthew and Luke, with some extra parts added...*

*The passage starts, too, as though beginning the chapter again, introducing Mary Magdalene as though she hasn’t already been mentioned several times in the preceding two paragraphs. We can’t say for certain that nothing in this passage comes from Mark, but it doesn’t seem to me likely. That’s not to say there’s nothing we can learn here.”* Mark for Everyone, p.226.

What can we learn?

\* The theme of unbelief and faith.

It isn’t that when we follow Jesus we will never have to deal with unbelief again.

There is ongoing conflict between the two; tension between the unseen and the seen. But Jesus is committed not only to challenge, but to rebuke stubborn unbelief in those who follow him.

\* As we share the gospel, Jesus is with us - he works with us; we work with him.