

The King The Cross Part 13
Sermon Series on the Gospel of Mark
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
August 26, 2018

TEXT: Mark 16:1-8



This morning we finish our summer series on the Gospel of Mark, and you may be wondering what's going to happen right after, how we are going to mark the celebration. I did a pastoral inquiry out in the back field, and two young men, Matt Swallen and Justin Martinez, and a team stayed up all night roasting a 180 pound hog and 60 chickens. I want you to know that I sampled the hog and it is as good as it looks. If you haven't planned to stay, I really want to encourage you to stay. We are going to take an all-church photo during the hog roast with drone technology, and I encourage you to be there for that. It is going to be a great afternoon together. If you didn't bring something to share, that's okay. There is plenty of food, so we warmly invite you to be a part of that.

Let's turn our attention this morning to our last sermon in this summer series. It's been a great series based on the Gospel of Mark. We have been listening to the Gospel of Mark in conversation with three questions posed by *Christianity Explored*, a resource that God has used. We have used this on Wednesday nights. It's a great way for people who have not had background or exposure to the gospel and are invited to follow along with the method that God gave for sharing Christ. God, by His Holy Spirit, moved the hearts of the gospel writers to write down a narrative that could be shared, a story that could be told, one that has a beginning, a

middle, and an end. In *Christianity Explored*, there are three main questions posed that invite us through the Gospel of Mark to ask: “Who is Jesus?” Secondly, “Why did Jesus come?” and thirdly, “What does it mean for us?” As we have journeyed throughout the Gospel of Mark this summer, we have seen repeatedly that the answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?” is answered: “He is the Christ, He is the King.” Many of our worship songs include this royal language. This is so important for us, especially as those who live in a democracy. It is so vital to remember that the kingdom of God is not a democracy, and that's a good thing. The kingdom of God is democratic in the sense that we together share the image of God, and God regards men and women with an equality of person, and that is a beautiful truth from Scripture. The kingdom of God is run by a king, a king who never comes up for reelection and for whom there was never a succession problem. Jesus is the King God promised to send. He would put everything right by setting up a kingdom of justice and love. This is the first answer, and we've seen this throughout the Gospel of Mark. Last Sunday, we saw that the identity of Jesus as King was reinforced dramatically even at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross. Before Pilate He was asked: “Are you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked the crowd: “What shall I do with the King of the Jews?” The soldiers mocked Jesus: “Hail, King of the Jews,” and the charge hanging above Jesus while He was on the cross for six hours said: “The King of the Jews.” Jesus is the King, and that has great implications for us that we will come back to later.

Why did Jesus come? We have been answering this question that Jesus came to be rejected, to be killed, to rise again. Jesus interprets His own purpose in coming in this very language. Jesus' coming to this world has a very specific purpose. It's a specific purpose to draw to Himself the rejection that you and I all have of God in our lives, what the Bible calls sin. Jesus draws that upon Himself in His suffering. He is rejected, bearing the sin of the world. He dies the death that sinners deserve, and yet He promises that after three days He would rise again. We saw last week the moment where Jesus was on the cross dying the death that you and I deserve, absorbing the wrath of God, and yet the divine response to that was to open the veil of the temple from top to bottom and invite redeemed humanity into fellowship and reconciliation.

This morning, we look at the third aspect of this statement: that Jesus came to be rejected, to be killed, *and to rise again*. In fact, Jesus predicted these things repeatedly to His disciples in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark 8, right after Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus began to teach the disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things—listen to this language—and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and be killed, and after three days, rise again. Jesus continued through Galilee with the disciples, and in Mark 9:31, He states again:

“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise.”

Finally, in Mark 10:33-34, for the third time, as Jesus with the disciples is going up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, Jesus pulled the 12 aside and said to them again:

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise.”

What Jesus said would come to pass came to pass in Jerusalem. He was delivered over; He was rejected. We heard that two weeks ago. Last Sunday, we saw that He was mocked, spit upon, flogged, and He was killed on the cross, what the Roman rhetorician Cicero said was the greatest mode of suffering ever conceived by the hands of men. Jesus’ final promise is that he would rise again. If Jesus is not right about the last thing that He said, then nothing else He said can be trusted. Our passage seeks to answer this final promise.

Mark 16:1 says:

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him.”

Mary Magdalene, a woman from whom Jesus cast out many demons, Mary, the mother of Jacob or James the Lesser, and Salome, probably the mother of James and John, are on their way to the tomb. They are bringing spices to treat the body of Jesus with honor and respect. They intend to cover His body with aromatic spices. Mark takes care to tell us that they arrived at the tomb, and the Sabbath was passed. This is a critical time indicator. In the way of reckoning time in the Bible, any portion of a day counts as a day. Jesus was crucified on Friday, day one; Sabbath, day two; and now the Sabbath was passed at the beginning of Sunday, the third day. Mark takes care to remind us of this moment. It is the third day. Mark 16:2 tells us:

“And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.”

It was the very first day of the week, a reckoning of time in Scripture time that begins with creation in imitation of God as our Creator and climaxes on the Sabbath. The very first day of creation is that moment when God says: *“Let there be light.”* Day one turns out to be Sunday. They go to the tomb, and they were saying to one another in Mark 16:3:

“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

These women go out of their love for Jesus, their devotion to Him, seeking to anoint His body, to mask the fumes of decomposition, and to honor Him. They are wondering, rightly: *“Who will roll the stone away?”* as they approach this rock-cut tomb. Rock-cut tombs are found throughout the land of Israel during this time period. It is a convention that is dated within the

New Testament period. More than 900 burial caves of been found around Jerusalem. Several of them have a round stone that is used. It is four to six feet in diameter, about one inch thick, and weighs one to two tons, two to four thousand tons, and this stone was rolled down a carved path in front of the burial tomb, cut into bedrock. To close the tomb with the stone, the stone will be rolled down this groove in a decline. One or two men could accomplish this. To open the tomb, however, the stone, this one or two ton stone, would have to be rolled back up that



incline, and set, a task that would take at least four, maybe six, men to do. So, the women rightly wonder: “Who will roll the stone back for us that we might go in and anoint the body of our Lord?” That’s what they’re thinking. When they reach the tomb area, they look up and they saw to their astonishment that

the stone had been rolled back. Mark takes care to remind us it was very large; it was extremely heavy.

The women entered the tomb and they saw a young man sitting on the right-hand side. Inside these rock-cut tombs, there are flat benches where the bodies would be laid, and as they turn and look to the right, here is this young man sitting inside the tomb. He is dressed in a white robe, and Mark tells us that they were alarmed, or absolutely astonished. Their first reaction is amazement. A thousand thoughts probably rushed into their minds: Who are you? Why are you here? How did the stone get rolled back? Who sent you? And maybe most important of all: Where is the body of Jesus? This young man turns out to be an angel. Angels are often described as young men in Scripture. Dressed in this dazzling white robe, the angel says to them: “Don't be alarmed.” We need this angelic interpretation of these events, don't we? They go in to anoint the body of Jesus; they see this young man; and they are alarmed; and he says to them: “Do not be alarmed, and I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why, because you're seeking Jesus who was crucified.” Notice that the angel says specifically that Jesus really died. No one survived Roman crucifixion. “*You are seeking Jesus who was dead,*” and the angel says in Mark 16:6:

“He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.”

A thousand fresh thoughts must have come rushing into their minds: “Where is He now? What does this mean? What are we supposed to do?” They look and see the place where Jesus was laid. They stare at the empty bench. Now the angel, this young man, speaks again and tells them what they're supposed to do. In Mark 16:7, he says:

“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.”

In Mark 16:8, the women went out:

“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.”

They were in awe of this first news: Jesus has been raised, and the first people to learn about it are these three women who were then told to go and tell others.

I want asked the third question: “What does this mean for us?” As Mark takes us to the end of his Gospel, what does it mean for us that Jesus would be raised from the dead? There are about seven implications for us.

The first thing that this means for us is, number one: **Jesus is alive**. He really is alive. That means when you pray to Jesus, He is actually hearing you. That means when you seek His guidance in your life, He will respond. That means when you need His help, soon He will come. That means when you need His power to direct or shape your own affections, He will act. Jesus the King is alive and He reigns forever. That is why the answer in *Christianity Explored* is in the present tense. Some of you will remember that my worst grade in junior high was in English grammar. I still make grammatical errors. I have people my life who love me enough to remind me of those things, but grammatical truth was a later discovery for me. It's an acquired taste, and let me tell you, once you acquire it, it's wonderful because so much theological truth is right there. The answer to the question, “What does it mean for us?” means right now that Jesus **is** inviting people. You cannot do that if you are dead. Jesus is inviting people to come into His kingdom. It means that Jesus offers—present tense—all of this to anyone who repents and believes. Number one: Jesus the King is alive.

Number two: **Jesus speaks the truth**. Although sociologists tell us that we are in a post-truth environment and no one cares about the truth anymore, and although we keep saying that, the reality is we actually do care about that. Our struggle is that we don't know where to go to get it, right? I mean, are açai berries good for you, or not? Should you drink coffee in the morning, or not? You can go online, and you can find ten articles that say your next cup of coffee is putting you close to the grave. You can say, “Wow, I really like my coffee, so let me go find some other articles that say there are incredible health benefits of coffee. It delays dementia and keeps you alert,” and you say, “I know, I feel alert.” So, you see, we long for the truth, but we don't know where to find it. Let me tell you where to find it. The place to find it is from the lips of Jesus Christ. His Word, His statement, is where you can go and where you can always go to find out the truth. You may not like the truth initially. The truth may confront you; the truth may challenge you; the truth may humble you. The truth will, though, always, according to

Jesus, set you free. Jesus speaks the truth. He said that He came to be rejected, to be killed, and after three days rise again, and He was right about that. If He can be trusted about that, then He can be trusted when He says that if you put faith in Him, your sins will be forgiven and you will have eternal life. Jesus speaks the truth, number two.

Number three: The empty tomb means that Jesus' resurrection is an open, public truth. There was an empty tomb. People saw the tomb was empty, and no one has ever produced the body of Jesus. At the heart of Christian faith is an open, public truth. It's not done in the corner; it's not a secret set of knowledge; it's not information that was given only to the initiates. Every man-made religion guards its most important secrets and shares those only with the initiates, and yet Christianity rests on a large, open, public truth. The angel says: "Take a look. He is not here." I mentioned last Sunday Lee Strobel's journey in the book and then the film released earlier this year: *The Case for Christ*. Lee was an investigative reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. He went right after this very question: "Is there credible evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?" That was the center of his inquiry, and at the climax of that investigation, he reached the point that everyone has reached who has really investigated it, that there is historical evidence, eyewitness testimony, faithfully transmitted, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for the bodily resurrection of Christ. It is public truth, number three.

Number four: Jesus' resurrection from the dead on that first Sunday morning marks a new creation. That is why we gather on Sunday morning. That is why Sunday is the first day of the week. That is why this time to gather for worship marks the beginning of the new creation. John Levenson, a professor of Judaic studies at Harvard University, was immersed in the Old Testament, and he understands the centrality of resurrection in the biblical hope. He says:

"Like creation, resurrection is a supernatural act, a miraculous reversal of the course of nature. God transforms death into his own new act of creation. Resurrection is the miracle of the end time that restores the miracle of the beginning."

Biblical faith invites us to hope for a bodily resurrection that will mark the dawn of the new creation, and so Jesus is raised on the first day of the week. That means profoundly that God's new world has started, and it started on this first Sunday, and that new world is a world that is saturated with life. Just like the account of Genesis, as God is the Creator, there is a pluripotency of life.

Number five: Jesus' resurrection reverses death with the victory of the God of life. Do you long for God's victory over death this morning? Again, John Levenson says this:

"Resurrection is an end time event. It is one that we expect to occur in history, but also to transform and redeem history, an open, a barely imaginable world, beyond anything that preceded it. The resurrection of Jesus is not a resuscitation. It is a reversal of death and the victory of a living God."

Number six: Jesus' resurrection means that **God's command to all us at the end of the Gospel of Mark is to 'Go and tell.'** The angel says: "Go, tell His disciples." There is a promise that there you will see Him. You will see Jesus only if you go and tell. There's a tension at the end of the Gospel of Mark because the angel tells the women go and tell, but Mark 16:8 says:

"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."

Mark's gospel seems end this way: "Go and tell," and then these women come out of the tomb and they seem paralyzed with fear.

If you look at your Bible, you will notice that there is a textual variant in the manuscript tradition at the end of the Gospel of Mark. This might seem really anti-climactic to end the whole summer series on the Gospel of Mark with a textual variant, but stay with me. There are two endings to the Gospel of Mark, and in the printed editions of the Bible, like the one in our pew, you will see that Mark 16:9-20 is in brackets.

Let me help you understand what's going on. Remember that the Bible, especially the New Testament, is the best-attested work or document from the ancient world. Our best complete manuscripts, like this one which is called *Codex Vaticanus* and is in the Vatican library in Rome.



This is the manuscript, and you can see that the middle of the three columns of the Gospel of Mark of this folio leaf, ends with words underneath that say in Greek *kata Markon, according to Mark*, and that's the ending. So, we see the ending in this, one of our best complete manuscripts, ends at Mark 16:8, and verses 9-20 are not there. Eusebius and Jerome, early Christian leaders, say that the best manuscripts, or the majority of the manuscripts that they knew didn't have

verses 9-20. Mark's gospel, then, seems to end abruptly with: "Go and tell, and they were astonished," and then it ends. It's almost an unbearable tension, and we wonder what happened.

In the manuscript tradition, there are a couple of slight variations for how the Gospel of Mark ends. Remember that we have thousands of these manuscripts, and there is one variation in a manuscript family that picks up and answers the question of what happened next. It answers it with the language of Mark 16:9-20. We wonder: Jesus is raised; the angel announces, "See the place; He is not here; go and tell;" and they were frozen with astonishment. What happened?

Mark 16:9-20 tells us what happened. It tells us that He appeared to Mary Magdalene, and she went and told the disciples that He was alive, and they didn't believe. In Mark 16:12-13 we read:

"After these things He appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them."

Finally, Jesus appears to the Eleven as they were reclining at the table, and He rebuked them for their unbelief, and then He commissioned them in Mark 16:15-17:

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. . . and these signs will accompany those who believe. . ."

There would be miraculous signs confirming the gospel, and they went out and preached everywhere, and we say, "Oh!" That is the end!

We don't know exactly what happened, but most scholars think what happened was that at some point in the second century, scribes felt the tension of how the gospel could possibly end with "and they were afraid." Some scribes must have thought that the last column, or the last leaf, must have been damaged. What's the ending? There's no new doctrine; there's no great truth that hangs on these verses; but at some point in the textual tradition, the language of Mark 16:9-20 was included in some manuscripts to resolve this tension. It's really a combination of information that's learned from the other gospels. When scholars look closely at these verses, there are 17 words that Mark never uses, so the style really isn't like Mark's. But, definitely motivated by love for Christ at some point in the tradition, some scribes thought the ending is lost. How can the gospel end with this tension? It was not motivated by malice but a sincere desire to think that maybe the ending was lost. Well, the good news is that we have many manuscripts, and we can check. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark actually ends at verse 8, and that's why the text in Mark 16:9-20 is printed in brackets.

So, if we go back to Mark 16:8, how does this verse really end the gospel well? I think Mark 16:8 actually ends it well, because implication number seven of the resurrection of Jesus is an invitation to you and to me as the reader: **What are you going to do about it?** As we have looked at the implications of Jesus' resurrection: the King is alive; He speaks the truth; His resurrection is an open, public truth; it marks the dawn of a new creation; the victory of the God of life; and the angel's command to go and tell about it, now sits with you as a reader. Just as Mark's gospel begins dramatically and suddenly: "This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," the Gospel of Mark ends suddenly with: "What are you going to do about it?" It really invites a response. It invites a reaction from the reader. What is the actual ending? Well, the actual ending, number seven, is that the Gospel of Mark ends with Christ's ending through these women and through you. The angel just told you that Jesus is risen. What

will you do? You will see Him if you commit to following Him. He is going before you. Will you go and tell? Or will you not tell anyone because you're afraid? That is the tension at the end. The tension of the Gospel of Mark isn't actually in the manuscript tradition. We have a pretty good idea of what happened. The real tension of the ending is in you, and in me. It's to the first century reader and the twenty-first century reader, and the tension is: Will you go and tell? Or will you not tell anyone because you are afraid?

What happened? These women did go. They went and told the disciples. We know from the other gospels that "go and tell" caused the disciples to go to Galilee, and they saw Jesus there. "Go and tell" meant that they returned to Jerusalem and proclaimed Him there, and 3000 people responded to the first sermon. "Go and tell" meant that the Word of Christ spread to every major city of the Roman empire within two generations. "Go and tell" reached the ears of the Emperor Constantine within two centuries, and he became a believer. "Go and tell" reached into the hearts and minds of two billion people on the planet over the next 2000 years.

So, where are we now? What does it mean for us? Fifty-nine percent of the people on the planet have been offered the gospel. Forty-one percent of people-groups still have not heard. What are you going to do about it? is the ending of the Gospel of Mark. We have been praying for Kenwood this summer for 25 evangelistic initiatives, to take a step in sharing Christ. At the end of the summer, I want to tell you what has happened, at least from what I can see. We saw ten families share meals with Muslim families to talk about spiritual things. We had eight neighborhood or workplace small groups meet to talk about the Gospel of Mark and explore Jesus Christ. Dozens of you had one-on-one meetings over lunch or coffee with someone. We had three large outreach initiatives over the summer reaching 300 children, 85% from the community: VBS, Soccer Camp, and then touching our neighbors at the Madeira Street Festival. Many of us took just small steps to initiate relationships. You discovered when you looked at all of your friends, you realized: "Everyone I know is a Christian. No wonder I'm so irritable!" I love what the English missionary C.T. Studd said about us: "You know, Christians are like manure, and if you pile them all together in a big pile, it smells bad. But, if you spread them out in the field, they benefit that field and nourish it and all kinds of things start to grow around it." Can you handle that sort of self-deprecating image of us? We have got to be able to handle that. There is a real truth in that, isn't there?

Many of us took steps, small ones, and I want to celebrate that. One of my neighbors starts every morning reading *The New York Times*, having coffee, and just a small step for me with him was just to say, "Did you find any good news in there?" He said, "No! I don't know why I read it." I was just trying to prepare the ground for another conversation: "I've found a place where there is some good news. Shall we read that together?" Others of you felt a gathering

conviction from the Holy Spirit to start conversations. Remember that acronym SALT? Start the conversation; Ask questions; Listen; and then Tell the gospel story.

This summer we had some real conversions here, and I think for me, as I look back at this ministry year that really ends this Sunday, that's what makes me the happiest of everything that happened at Kenwood this year. We had some people, through this church, who have eternal life, but didn't have it last year. Jesus says that generates more rejoicing in heaven than anything, so I want to celebrate all that God has done.

I want to invite us, as we close this series and the time of prayer, before we go celebrate and enjoy each other's company, I want to invite us all to respond. We are going to sing a song that invites us to come to the altar area of Christ. I am going to ask you to stand, and as we start to sing this song, I want to ask first if you're here and you've been here all summer or you are here this morning and you've never said, "Jesus, You are my King and I want You in my life. You were rejected, died, and rose again for me." If that has become clear to you this morning, I want to ask you to come down here as we start singing. I want to ask you, though, to come down here if you've taken a small step in someone specifically in your life and you are thinking of them. You can come down here and stand here and represent the person that you just took a step to reach. I also want to ask you if you're here and you're like me sometimes and you are disoriented and you feel that life moves so fast and you are barely catching up with it and you say, "Wait, what happened? What was this series about?" and you are picking it up at the last stop, and you want to say, "That sounds like it was a great series. Maybe I'll go back and listen online, but I want to commit myself afresh to going and telling." We are going to sing. Let me pray, and I want you to come down here and visibly represent what God has done in and through you this summer.

Dear Lord Jesus, we praise You this morning, conquering Son of God. Lord, we've been given a great gift this summer to explore faith in You, and Lord God Almighty, I pray with all my heart for those here right now who have been thinking about Jesus this summer, wondering if He really is King for them. I pray, Lord, that they would hear Your invitation clearly and powerfully right now, and that they would just move now towards this altar as we sing and put faith in You. For the rest of us who have taken a step, we have had even one conversation this summer, been involved in one outreach, we want to come and stand together and represent the lives that were seeking to "go and tell." Lord, for others of us who are just there catching up with life and following You as best as we can, and are sensing for the first time, "I want to recommit in Your presence, Lord God, that I want to "go and tell others about You." Would you come as well? Lord Jesus, we love You. We praise You. We magnify You together.

Amen.