

Gripped by the Resurrection

Mark 15:42-16:13 (01/31/16)

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Referring to Christ hanging on the cross, S. M. Lockridge proclaimed, "It's Friday, but Sunday is coming!" Sunday has come. The tomb is empty. He really did arise! We live in the sunshine of that Sunday that came! As Luther said, "Live as if Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and is coming back tomorrow."

This morning we're going to walk through the end of Friday and into that sunshine of Sunday morning. Jesus was swallowed by death, but He didn't stay there. He slew that monster and walked out of his mouth, alive forevermore! A roar of angels' cheers must have filled heaven's stadium when He burst forth from death's dark domain.

I love what Jesus said to John in Revelation 1:17-18. John said, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and **I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**'"

Sunday came! Hope is alive! Death is not the end regardless of what our secular culture tries to tell us! Has that Sunday changed your life? Are you gripped by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Has this reality blasted into your heart and filled you with that living, joyful hope?

Let's trace the end of Friday up to early Sunday morning and see what God has to teach us about two things. What if Jesus never rose? And has the fact that He did rise from the dead gripped your life?

What if Jesus never rose from the dead? – 15:42-16:1

Remember, no one believed Jesus would really rise from the dead. Here at the end of Friday you have Joseph and Nicodemus burying Jesus, and you have a group of ladies watching every move carefully. But His rising from the dead was the last thing on their mind.

- **First you have a devoted but secret follower of Christ – he cares for Jesus' body.**
Mark 15:42-43 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:9 said Jesus would be buried in a rich man's tomb, and sure enough, here comes this gentleman, this wealthy gentleman, this godly gentleman, to fulfill God's Word, even though he was probably not aware of doing so. Did he believe Jesus was going to rise from the dead? I seriously doubt it. He was hoping for the fulfillment of God's promise of the glorious kingdom restored to Israel, and he probably hoped Jesus would bring it in somehow, but that hope was quenched, at least for now.

Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin and Luke tells us he did not go along with the majority in turning Jesus over to Pilate. He and his good friend Nicodemus were disciples of Christ, although they didn't announce it publicly. Luke records that Nicodemus accompanied Joseph in caring for Jesus' body.

Joseph owned an unused tomb nearby and decided to see if he could get Jesus' body from Pilate. Jews didn't allow bodies to hang on crosses like this for the Sabbath, and before anyone cut down Jesus' dead body, Joseph wanted to give Jesus an honorable burial. We give this man

kudos for screwing up his courage to go to Pilate for the body. This was his public testimony that he did stand with Jesus, even though Jesus now hung limp on that cross.

Mark 15:44-46 Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. 45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Joseph approaches Pilate. What's Pilate been doing? He's been trying to make up with his wife. Remember, he didn't follow her counsel to have nothing to do with this righteous man. So Pilate has to be sure Jesus is dead and asks the centurion, "Is He already dead? They don't usually die that quickly." That centurion knows when men hanging on those crosses are dead and he gave witness to Pilate that Jesus had died. Of one thing we are sure – Jesus is dead! He had not just fainted. He was dead. So Pilate gave Joseph authority over Jesus' corpse (v. 45). This is the only time Jesus' dead body was called a corpse.

With Pilate's approval, Joseph, in loving devotion to Jesus whom he must have known well, goes out publicly to take care of Jesus' body. Calvin says if Joseph had such a holy desire to honor Christ while He was hanging on that cross, "woe to our slothfulness if, now that He has risen, an equal zeal to glorify Him does not burn in our hearts!" We should be gripped by a far greater zeal and boldness for Him!

Joseph knew if Jesus' body wasn't cared for, it would be taken down and thrown into the garbage area of the Valley of Hinnon, where scavengers might eat his flesh or the fires would burn Him. This would be the norm for dead criminals. That's probably what happened to the other two hanging with Jesus.

Joseph and Nicodemus brought linen clothes and about 70 pounds of spices to the cross. They took Jesus' body from the cross, wrapped Him with the linen tucking the spices inside the folds, and laid the body in the inner recess of this tomb on a ledge or bench. Then they rolled a very heavy round stone, possibly an old millstone a little over a yard in diameter, into the prepared groove, and the tomb was secured. The Jewish authorities thought the disciples might steal the body and say He arose from the dead, so the officers also put a seal on the stone to be sure no one tampered with it.

You just have to really respect this man Joseph. God has his "Josephs of Arimathea" here and there to care for God's people. Maybe you are one. May God richly bless your devotion to Christ!

- **And then you have these devoted female followers of Christ – they express their love for Jesus.**

Mark 15:47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were looking on to see where He was laid. Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.

These women are truly to be admired. First, isn't it interesting that God would use women as the first wave of witnesses to the resurrection? Under Judaism, women's testimonies carried no weight in a court of law, but here women are God's first witnesses to the greatest event in human history. These women had followed Christ. He had blessed their lives. He had cast seven demons out of Mary of Magdalene. We don't know what that meant, but she was forever thankful. Their hearts of love and devotion and loyalty to Jesus were not stopped by His death. They didn't believe He was going to rise from the dead, but they didn't run away like the disciples did! Where are those disciples? They've cut and run! Their hopes and dreams have been smashed. Two of them said, "We had hoped He would redeem Israel!"

So these ladies watched and knew exactly where Joseph and Nicodemus laid Jesus' body. They did not go to the wrong tomb on Sunday morning. Oh no! I'm sure ladies have not changed over the years. Ladies forget nothing. Your wife knows where everything is in your kitchen, maybe even in your garage. You look for an item and can't even find it if it is right in front of you. But your wife steps in and within five seconds hands it to you. This is one reason Adam needed Eve, a helper in the details of life. This is one of the blessings of marriage. So it is no surprise that these ladies are very attentive to detail and know exactly where Jesus' body was laid.

Mark 16:1 - Now, Friday is over. The Sabbath day is over. It's after 6 PM Saturday night and these loving, devoted souls went down to the spice store and bought spices to take to the grave the next morning to anoint Him.

Let's pause right here. What if the Gospels ended right here? When you read biographies, they will often end with a chapter describing the character and enduring influence of the man or woman. Imagine if this was it. Born 5 BC. Died AD 33. He was a good man and a great teacher. He performed miracles. He loved people, even children and babies. He was a wonderful man. He died on a cross outside Jerusalem, a huge miscarriage of justice. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. He has left us with a wonderful legacy, like George Washington.

What if Sunday had never come? What difference would it make in your life?

If Sunday had never come and Jesus had not risen from the grave, millions around this world would never have been converted by a dead Jewish Christ, regardless of how wonderful He was. A dead Jesus could save no one. Jesus didn't train His men for three years to conquer the world with swords, putting to death all who refuse to submit to His teachings.

What if Sunday had never come? We can't bear the thought! This world would be a huge joke. In recent book entitled *A Brief History of Humankind*, author Yuval Noah Harari insists, "human life has absolutely no meaning. Humans are the outcome of blind evolutionary processes that operate without goal or purpose. Our actions are not part of some divine cosmic plan. ... Any meaning that people ascribe to their lives is just a delusion." No wonder people are committing suicide and shooting one another and racked with addiction to drugs and pornography. You feel sorrow for anyone who doesn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If the resurrection hasn't gripped and totally changed your life, we feel sorrow for you. This takes us to my second question. Given that He did rise from the dead...

Has the resurrection of Jesus Christ gripped your life? – 16:2-13

Now let's go with these ladies as they head out early Sunday morning. They are about to discover what S. M. Lockridge meant by "Sunday's comin'!" This is the most exciting part of the Bible. The reality of what they are about to learn is intense. It is amazing, gripping, chilling.

- Concern about the large stone
Mark 16:2-3 Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

Let me remind you again, Christianity does nothing but elevate women. These women in their 40s and 50s go out there early in the morning when the disciples are somewhere sleeping and grieving. They are coming to honor their Lord by anointing His body with these aromatic spices. There isn't the slightest thought that Jesus had risen. They know that big stone is there, and as they make their way up the incline you can hear their feminine voices with labored breathing in the early morning coolness discussing together how they're going to move that stone, "I doubt we can move it. We should have brought the men with us."

- Distressed that the stone had been moved
Mark 16:4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

Oh no! Their hearts dropped, "Someone beat us to it! Did someone steal the body?" Remember, they have no thought of a resurrection. Matthew's gospel tells us what happened; there was an earthquake earlier and an angel rolled that stone away. I wish the security cameras were running for that!

- Terror-struck inside the tomb
Mark 16:5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

Luke says they were terrified. They had expected to see Jesus' body. What a moment in biblical history is this! They see this young man, obviously an angel. There were actually two, but Mark only speaks of one. Their faces drained of color, eyes bewildered, bowing in terror, awe, and wonder. What follows is pure gold, the greatest breaking news ever!

- Running with the good news
Mark 16:6-8 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" 8 They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The tomb was in two parts, the front area and an inner chamber where Jesus' body would have been laid. But it's not there. The linen is there, the head towel is there, everything neatly folded, but Jesus isn't there. And then this young man tells them. He is risen is one seven-letter word. One seven-letter word identifies the greatest miracle in all human history.

Jesus had gone into death, paying for sins, swallowing that cup completely. Now, at some point after sundown Saturday evening when the Jewish Sabbath ended and Sunday began, as his cold corpse lay in this tomb, His heart resumed beating. Blood began pushing through His veins. He began to suck in air to His lungs. His flesh began to warm and strength returned to His muscles. Death could not keep its prey! He sat up, stood up, folded the linen and the head towel, looked around for the last time at His tomb, Joseph's tomb, and walked right through the stone, risen from the dead! He is alive!

This is the hope at the heart and center of Christianity. This is the good news Peter and Paul took to the Jews and Gentiles in every sermon in Acts. To the Jews Peter declared, "You killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead!" Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and now, according to Romans 10:9-10, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved!" Sunday has come!

These women, gripped with fear, astonishment, joyful incredulity, run like the wind back to find the disciples! Can you imagine? There they go, their robes flying out behind them, sandals hardly touching the ground, racing down the hillside, over rocks and across the Kidron Valley into the gate of the city. We do know from Matthew 28:9 that Jesus met them on the way. But down the narrow street they ran to where they knew the disciples were. The flight of the ladies! Not only to tell them that Jesus wants to meet them in Galilee, but Jesus has extended a special invitation to Peter. Did you see that in verse seven? Peter must have heard that and knew he was forgiven. Jesus knows His people, and even when we deny Him in a moment of weakness, He doesn't forget us or love us any less!

These ladies are gripped by the reality of the risen Christ! What about you?

- Difficulty to believe the good news
Mark 16:9-13 [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. 10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. 12 After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. 13 They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

Verses nine through the end of Mark may not be in your Bible. These verses are in the manuscripts from the middle ages, but many earlier manuscripts have been found that do not have this portion. However, everything recorded here is true and verified by other Gospels, so we aren't reading anything untrue.

I just want to point out two things. First, Mary did meet Christ and she did come to the disciples with this report, "I have seen the Lord!" Now that is just awesome! Of course they didn't believe her, "Yeah, right, Mary. You've had some other issues, too!" And second, Jesus will be meeting up with them in Galilee. We'll look at that and what Jesus told them next week.

SO WHAT?

How does Christ's resurrection grip your heart?

- Christianity is true – When I was first saved and wondered if it was really all true, I'd go to that empty tomb and think, if that tomb is empty, if Christ really rose, then the whole thing is true.
- Jesus is the perfect Savior – He was the sinless Son of God and death could not hold Him.
- Sin is paid – *tetelestai* – He had paid the price of sin in full on the cross! His resurrection assures us that God was pleased with His work on the cross.
- Death is destroyed – swallowed up in Christ's victorious resurrection.
- Satan is conquered – Jesus delivered him his "knock-out punch." Hebrews 2:14 says through His death Christ rendered powerless the devil, who had the power of death.
- We will rise again – If God raised Jesus, then He will raise us also!
- Jesus will judge all mankind – Acts 17:31 says God appointed a day when He will judge all men through Jesus, whom He raised from the dead! You will face Jesus some day! Are you ready? Are you gripped by His resurrection?
- This is our good news to the world – He is not here; He is risen as He said! Amen? Go run and tell someone!