

**Eternity's Greatest Hero (Mark 15-16)**  
**Easter Sunday 2017**  
**Southern Hills Baptist Church**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome. I am thrilled to be here with you tonight. Happy Easter! Easter is such an important time of year. At the beginning of the week we started talking to our girls about Easter by asking them what Easter is about. They both eagerly responded, "Candy! Toys! Eggs!" To which Rachel looked at me and said, "Parenting fail." They were missing the bigger point. I get it, I get it, I understand why my 6 year old and 2 year old get hyped about candy, toys, and decorated Easter baskets. Those things are fun. We want Easter to be fun. We want it to be a celebration.

We have a lot to celebrate, don't we?

- Easter heralds that God's mission in Christ has been accomplished.
- Easter is proof that all the claims Jesus made in His life are more true than we could have ever imagined.
- Easter gives us a confident hope in the future.
- Easter is a preview of the grand reality that awaits those who have trusted Jesus.
- Easter tells us there is something glorious beyond this life and the grave is not the end.

Candy, toys, baskets, those are all great, **but there is something bigger going on when we celebrate Easter** and that is what we are here rejoice over tonight.

So tonight we will turn our attention to that first Easter morning as we hear from someone who was there and who walked by Jesus' side for 3 years. A man who was an eyewitness to the events of that first Easter, the Disciple Mark. With that said turn in your Bibles over to Mark 15.

As you turn over let me share a little about myself growing up...

**Hero Worship**

Growing up I was really into superheroes. I watched a lot of Batman, Spiderman, of course the Ninja Turtles and many others, but the one that stood out to me as I was growing up was Superman. He pretty much had it all. He could fly, bullets bounced off of his chest, he was strong enough to lift cars and he even shot lasers out of his eyes. What is not to like, am I right? Beyond his abilities, he was an all-around great guy. He fought for what was right, he was kind to people, he was a one-woman kind of guy (he only had eyes for Lois), and when times were bleak b/c a super villain was on the move he was always there in the nick of time to save the good people of metropolis.

**A Culture That Loves Heroes**

As an adult not much as changed. I don't get around to watching a lot of cartoons with Superman or Batman, but you can bet when the movies come out I am there. As a culture we all love heroes, don't we? Take a look at the big box office hits that Hollywood churns out. Most of them have a hero who is there to save the day...

I was watching David Letterman a while back and he was interviewing Tom Cruise about a movie he

had released, it was called Jack Reacher, maybe you saw it. Letterman was telling Cruise how much he liked it b/c he loved how Cruise's character was willing to do whatever it took to see justice served. Cruise commented that we all have built in desire to see good triumph over evil. That we all instinctively root for heroes and want to see them overcome the odds and ignore bureaucracy and red tape to make sure that good prevails. Watching these heroes in movies serves as a "wish fulfillment" as they remove our worries as they take care of what we couldn't.

As I listened to this interview I couldn't help but agree. I love heroes and I think we all do. We all want that strong character in our lives that we can count on and trust to be there for us. That is why we love the movies. We love to go see these guys in action as they take care of people and take out the trash, right?

### **WHY WE NEED A BETTER HERO: SIN**

**As great as the superheroes in the movies are, we need a better hero in our life than anything Hollywood or a comic book can dream up b/c the danger we face is greater than anything mere humanity can take on themselves.** So what is the problem exactly? What is this great danger that no hero we could dream up could ever solve for? **What danger lurks within us and threatens to bring judgment upon our soul and send us into an eternity in Hell? SIN!** Sin is the great danger. Let me share why.

#### **1. Sin is Sneaky**

Sin is so dangerous b/c it is sneaky. Listen to how James describes it...

##### **James 1:14-15**

**14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

**15** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

**Sin is something that grows from within, it doesn't confront you face to face and say, "Hi, I'm sin, would you like to engage with me today?" No, it hunts stealthily.** It finds open doors we wouldn't expect by taking good thing that we desire and turning them into ultimate things, idols. This growth happens slowly as our text indicates, we are tempted, we are lured, enticed by our desires, we give into sin, it brings death. It happens very subtly.

It is almost like bad cholesterol or high blood pressure. As they build up within you they can be deadly, but b/c we can't see them standing in front of us we often don't even know that they are a problem. **Sin attacks in the same way, it is killing us from within, often without us having any idea. Sin is often winning the battle before we even know there is a fight for our soul.**

This sin that sneaks and lures brings forth great consequences...

#### **2. Sin Brings Separation**

Sin brings separation. It separates us from God. Listen to what Isaiah says about sin...

##### **Isaiah 59:1-3**

**1** Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;

**2** but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

**3** For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness.

Our sin builds up a wall between us as God. It isn't that God is lacking in ability to save any. It our sin that has built a wall separating us from God. **Sin does not pose hypothetical or theoretical dangers. It is a very real danger separating us from God!**

### **3. Sin Brings Judgment**

Not only does sin separate us from God, but sin brings a penalty along with it. After running through a laundry list of sins that include: gossip, coveting, mean-spiritedness, pride, boastful talk, lying, and many other sins that we all struggle with on a regular basis Paul says this...

#### **Romans 2:2**

**2** We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

Notice... Paul didn't talk about murder, or rape, or grand larceny, he talked about lying, gossip, pride, sins that we struggle with daily. And there is a price to be paid for the sin in our lives. God's judgment falls on those who practice such things. So you've lied before, right? I know, that isn't the best question, the better question is, have you lied this week? My guess is that we have all struggled with dishonesty in one form or fashion, meaning that this judgment hangs over all of us. Romans 1 says that sin against God is something that is worthy of death. Romans 6 says that is exactly the price that will be paid for sin.

#### **Romans 6:23a**

The wages of sin is death...

When Paul talks about death in this context he is not talking about our bodies or lives on earth, but he is talking about a spiritual death. He is speaking about the kind of death that Jesus talked about in Matthew 10 with our souls. This is a harsh reality, but it is reality.

### **4. Sin... We All Have It**

So sin is sneaky and it comes with a big price – spiritual death. Even worse news. No one is exempt. We all have sin. Listen to James...

#### **James 2:10-11**

**10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

**11** For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

The argument that James is making here is that one sin, just one, in the entirety of your life is enough to condemn you before God. Now some may hear this and say, "Thomas, that doesn't sound right, God wouldn't dole out an eternal punishment for one sin. The punishment doesn't fit the crime." Here is what you need to understand, **it isn't the quantity of your sins that condemns you so, it is the heinous nature of your sins, it isn't about how many sins you have committed, but who you have sinned against, God, the Law-Giver.** It doesn't matter what sin you have committed any of them are a rejection of God. When you reject any of the law, defy any of the law, you defy God Himself.

**We are in Trouble and in Need of a Better Hero**

As we consider all of these things what we are learning quickly is that we are in real trouble, right? **Sin is a real danger, a danger greater than cancer or heart disease, a danger greater than ISIS or terrorism.** We need a hero. A hero unlike any other hero we have ever known.

- We need a hero who can **overcome the sin in our lives.**
- We need a hero who can **defeat death**, which is inevitable for all.
- We need a hero who can **deliver what God requires** to offer forgiveness of sins.
- We don't need a hero who is pretty good, but has some flaws and is rough around the edges. We need **a perfect hero.**
- We need a hero who is **willing to give up everything** to save us.
- We need a hero who can **overcome and do what no one else can.**

### **Jesus is that Hero!**

I am guessing all of you are tracking with me up to this point, but just to make sure we are all on the same page... **Jesus is that hero!** Jesus is the only one who can offer salvation for our souls.

### **Roadmap for Today**

Today is Easter. Easter has been made to be about many different things... eggs... bunnies... candy..., but what Easter is really about is celebrating that Hero that we so desperately need and reflecting on His greatest victory. We are here to worship Jesus! **So with our time tonight we are going to walk through a few key moments in Jesus' life when He heroically did what no one else could do in a way that no one expected.**

Jesus' story is a painful one, but the pain was all Jesus' so that we could avoid the pain and eternal death that we have all brought on ourselves through our sin.

### **CONTEXT**

Before we dive into the last days of Jesus let me catch you up on where we are picking up in Jesus' life...

### **Gaining a Following**

Jesus had attracted a lot of attention to Himself. People were flocking to Him. They wanted to see Him for a number of reasons. First and foremost, **Jesus was different. He loved people.** He was not too good for anyone. This stood in stark contrast to many of the religious leaders of the day. He also had a very different message. It wasn't about how well you could live by the law of God, but instead it **focused on the grace of God and faith.** Jesus called people to repentance and to follow after Him. As Jesus taught He was commonly questioned by the religious leaders of the day in an attempt to trip Him up and make Him look foolish, but **Jesus stood toe to toe with the religious leaders** and there was no questioning the truth He shared. As Jesus went from town to town investing in people and teaching He was also **performing miracles.** He was healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even bringing the dead back to life.

It was from all of this that Jesus' following continued to grow.

### **A Hero's Welcome**

As Jesus went from town to town His destination was always set to be Jerusalem. As He entered Jerusalem He was given a Hero's welcome as people greeted Him at the gate and laid palms down and praised God for His presence.

## Cloud 9 - Disciples

From the perspective of the Disciples, things could not have been going better. **Jesus was now in the capital. Surely He would rise to power here.** They knew He could not be stopped. They had seen what he was capable of. As they followed Jesus they were surly on cloud 9, right? **All of the sacrifice they had made was going to pay off.** Jesus would ascend to power and they would be right there with Him.

## Anger and Bitterness – Religious Leaders

As happy as the disciples were, the religious leaders of the day felt very differently. They did not like all the attention that Jesus was getting. It undermined their authority and that was something they could not tolerate. So they schemed to have one of His disciples, Judas, help betray Him. Judas knew Jesus would be spending the evening in a garden to be alone in prayer so he led the soldiers of the chief priest to Jesus where He was arrested. The Chief Priest made sure to do this at night so the city wouldn't be aware and so he could set up a phony trial without anyone interjecting. He knew the city would be in an uproar if they heard so he had to act fast. And they did just that, bringing Jesus before a quickly thrown-together, sham of a trial.

## Phony Trial for a True Hero

In this false trial the Pharisees brought a number of accusations they could not support. They even brought a number of false witnesses, but even the false witnesses could not get their stories straight. Growing weary of the failures to get some charges that would stick against Jesus the Chief Priest cuts to the chase and asks Jesus if He is really the Son of God. Jesus finally speaks up and proclaims the truth we have known all along. Yes! He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God. He is God! This was all the Chief Priest needed to hear. He was not going to take any time to investigate this, he just wanted Jesus out of his life so he sentenced him to death.

For the sake of time we will cut over to Mark 15 where we see Jesus' sentence of death being carried out.

## OUR PUNISHMENT ON HIS BEHALF (15:16-40)

At this point Jesus has been sentenced to death. Listen as Mark describes Jesus being led to His death...

### **Mark 15:16-20**

16 And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion.

17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

18 And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

## **The Beating of God**

Before they head up to the place where Jesus would be crucified, the guards decide to have a little fun at Jesus' expense. Verse 16 says they called together the whole battalion. **It was not just one or two guards beating on Jesus, but it was everyone who was on duty.** We don't know how many that would have been, but likely dozens of armed guards, circled around Jesus. They were chanting at Him and mocking Him. They put on a purple robe on Him and sarcastically called Him the King of the Jews. They put a crown of thorns on His head as ironic crown.

## Unrecognizable

Then... they persisted in beating Jesus. They repeatedly hit him in the head with staffs (reeds). Can you imagine being beaten by a mob of soldiers? **Each blow pushing that crown of thorns further and further into your head.** With the mob that was there surely each soldier wanted his turn so this undoubtedly went on forever. Isa 52:14 says that Jesus was beaten beyond recognition.

The description that we read of Jesus' beating here is incredibly concise. If you read in the other Gospel accounts you will read that Jesus was actually beaten and flogged on two occasions on top of the beating that we read about here. Jesus at this point is a bloody pulp and a broken man.

## How Does This Make You Feel?

Stop and think about this... **how does this make you feel?** Jesus, The Son of God, The Great I Am, Emmanuel, God with us, the Prince of Peace, the ONLY man in human history who was truly innocent. He had never sinned, in fact His entire life was spent for our good. He came and brought a Gospel of grace and salvation. He healed the lame, fed the hungry, reached out to the outcasts, loved the unlovable, stood for truth and the list could go on and on. He did all of these things and yet... these men felt it to be good to beat Him. To mock Him. To spit upon Him. To inflict as much pain as they possibly could before they had to lead Him to His death.

## Angry then Sad

How does this make you feel? As I thought about it this **week my first reaction was anger.** How dare they! But the more I thought about it **my emotional response was that of sorrow. Jesus was there enduring this for me! I wasn't there throwing those blows at the head of Jesus, but He was there for me and for you!** He didn't have to be there. He could have escaped had He wanted to. He could have called down a legion of angels or uttered just a word and rendered these guards temporarily paralyzed. He didn't. He stayed there.

## Love Kept Him There

The children's Bible that we read our daughters says very pointedly that **it wasn't the nails that held Jesus on the cross, it was His love for us.** The same is true here. Jesus stayed out of love for you and I. He took that beating b/c that is the kind of hero that we needed. **We needed a hero who would stand in our place.**

As we continue reading we see Jesus' public humiliation...

### Mark 15:21

21 And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

## Public Humiliation

It was customary to make the one who has been sentenced to death carry their cross to the place where they would be killed. This was a way to publically shame and embarrass the convicted. It would be much like a man on death row holding a big press conference with all of the major news outlets as he was forced to examine the electric chair that would take his life. **The whole town stood by and watched as the once great teacher Jesus who was beloved by so many, now was walking to His death.**

Again, can you imagine? **These men are publically shaming God!** They have no idea what they are really doing. Yet, Jesus endures to make salvation possible, even for them.

## Jesus' Need of Help

They had beaten Jesus so badly that they had to find help in carrying the cross of Jesus. He had become so physically weak from all of the floggings, head blows, and random beatings He had endured. He likely had a concussion, He surely has skull fractures and other broken bones, He probably had trouble seeing as His face was undoubtedly swollen all over and blood was running down His face. He couldn't go any further on His own, frankly it is amazing that He made it as far as He did, so the guards found another who could carry His cross for Him up to His death.

## Simon of Cyrene – A Historical Event

Simon was tasked to help Jesus. Notice all the detail that is given about Simon. We learn where he was from, Cyrene. We even learn he had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. Would it have been sufficient to say that a man who was watching was tapped to help out? Sure, but not for Mark. **You see, Mark is trying to add footnotes to this story that can be followed up on to validate its truthfulness.** As Mark gives these details he is giving breadcrumbs for people to follow up on to verify that this actually happened. **The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus isn't a legend or myth, it is a real historical event** and the Bible was written that we may know this.

Picking up in verse 22 as we see Jesus murdered as a criminal...

### Mark 15:22-40

[22] And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). [23] And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. [24] And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. [25] And it was the third hour when they crucified him. [26] And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." [27] And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. [29] And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, [30] save yourself, and come down from the cross!" [31] So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. [32] Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

[33] And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. [34] And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [35] And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." [36] And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." [37] And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. [38] And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. [39] And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

[40] There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

## Not the Way it was Supposed to Go

From the perspective of the disciples and other followers of Jesus, this was not the way it was supposed to go. **Heroes don't die like this! What were they going to do now?** If someone was writing the story of Jesus to try to help us identify with him and make us feel warm and fuzzy about Him they are doing an awful job, right? What should have happened is that right before Jesus was about to be crucified His disciples would have snapped out of their despair, organized, made a plan,

attacked the roman guards, freed Jesus and Jesus Himself would have brought it all together summoning every last ounce of strength He had to fight off the Romans and other religious leaders who had plotted against Him. Jesus would have then marched back into Jerusalem and assumed His rightful authority as leader. He would have captured all of those who plotted against them and thrown them in jail or had them killed.

### **Jesus was on a Bigger Mission**

This is what we see from the heroes we love in the movies we watch, right? This, however, is not what happened. Peter tried this approach right before Jesus was going to be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, but Jesus told him to put his sword down. Jesus was not interested in an uprising or overcoming those who were plotting against Him. He could have, but it was not God's will. Jesus did not come to overthrow the Romans or the corrupt religious leaders of the day. **He had His sights set on a far bigger enemy, one that could not only kill the body, but one that could kill the soul and bring judgment. You see Jesus was a better hero that we could have ever even dreamed up. We want Jesus to fix short-term problems, evil rulers and selfish religious leaders. Jesus came to solve our eternal problems by overcoming sin.** He didn't come to overthrow a government, but rather establish an eternal kingdom.

So instead of fighting off the Romans and putting the religious leaders in their place... He gives up His own life... He dies... a horrible death... an unjust death... in a shameful way.

### **Jesus' Shameful Death**

Jesus is hung on a cross between two criminals. Two men who really deserved death. This is the kind of company Jesus is forced to keep in his last hours. In these last hours people continue to hate on Jesus. The religious leaders, the chief priests and the scribes, have come back to look upon Jesus one more time and they continue to mock Him, telling Him to save Himself if He is really the Messiah.

### **Reminder: Religion Can't Save You**

This is a good reminder for us. Religion alone can't save you, can it? Simply knowing what the Bible says won't save you, will it? These religious leaders knew more about the Old Testament and God's law than anyone else. Their lives conformed to it more than anyone else's, yet... they killed God... they mocked God... they did not truly know God.

### **Christianity is All About Jesus**

This is a good reminder for us. Being a Christian is not necessarily about just knowing what the Bible says on every topic or being able to follow it to a "t". **Those things are important as we should want to know what God has to say and we should desire to live for Him, but they mean nothing if you don't have love for Jesus and faith in Him.** As a church this is where we have to start. **If we put all our focus on learning about what God says about life and turn our relationship with God into an academic experience or a set of rules to follow then we have lost what true faith is about, loving Jesus supremely.**

Christianity is not about rules; it is about a relationship, with this Man who hung on the cross.

After 6 hours hanging on the cross, Jesus... God... Creator of the World... dies...

**At this moment all hope seem lost.** It would seem as if evil and sin had won, but even in His death Jesus is accomplishing more than we will ever know. Let's take a moment to reflect on just a little of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

## **WHAT JESUS ACCOMPLISHED ON THE CROSS: PAYMENT FOR SINS**

Jesus Endured the Cross to Pay for our Sins. Listen to what Isaiah says about Jesus' death...

### **Isaiah 53:5-6**

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned-every one-to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

What we read here is that **Jesus literally took the punishment that was due us for our sins**. Do you remember back in Romans 2 where we read that the just penalty for sin was the judgment of God? This is something that makes the Gospel so different from any other world religion. **Karma and other world religions teach you that you get what you deserve. The Gospel tells us that Jesus got what we deserve and we get what Jesus deserves**. He took the punishment that we deserve! In Jesus we can find grace and mercy. We are not stuck in getting what we deserve, praise God! Jesus took that on our behalf.

### **1 Peter 2:24**

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."

### **Dying to Make Something Happen**

**Jesus did not die to simply be a martyr for His cause. He died to make something happen. He died to pay the price that we COULD NOT PAY**. Remember, we are all sinners and we are stuck in our sin. There is nothing we can do to get out of it. Jesus' death paid the price we could not pay.

Jesus defeated Sin for us! Again, Jesus did not come to overthrow an evil government or corrupt religious leaders. He came to save us from something that had eternal consequences... the sin each and every one of us have in our lives. Jesus' work on the cross offers a salvation that is bigger than you and I could ever imagine. We can't fully understand eternity, but this is exactly what Jesus purchased for those who have placed their faith in Him.

### **Good Friday = Biggest Understatement Ever**

This is why we call Good Friday, Good Friday. That is a bit of an understatement though, right? It was not just good, it was INFINITY EPIC. Words can't describe how good it was.

### **Transition to Resurrection Passage**

Remember, Jesus chose to lay down His life. He did it to purchase salvation, but death could not hold Jesus. Jesus is different than anyone else in the world who ever died. He was and is both fully man and fully God. He is not done writing this story of redemption yet.

So what exactly does this all mean? Let's pick up our reading in chapter 16...

## **HIS VICTORY IS OUR JOY (16:1-8)**

### **Mark 16:1-8**

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

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

3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back-it was very large.

5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

7 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."

8 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.

### **Mourning Disciples**

Where we pick up is with the Disciples in hiding. They had scattered and were laying low. Everywhere they went they were identified with Jesus and it was too painful for them to deal with so they were keeping a low profile and mourning. **They were all probably trying to make sense of life. They had given up everything to follow Jesus. They thought He was going to be the Messiah**, the Hero who would deliver them and they were right, but they had no idea what Jesus actually accomplished on the cross. They thought Jesus was as dead as the two criminals who hung on either side of Him. They knew he was buried in the grave that Joseph of Arimathia provided and thus all their hopes laid in that tomb with Jesus.

### **Rollercoaster of Emotions**

Can you imagine the rollercoaster of emotions they had been riding? Earlier that week they had come into Jerusalem with Jesus and were greeted with a Hero's welcome. People chanting praises to Jesus. They all felt the anticipation of something special happening. Everyday was special with Jesus as His teachings were revolutionary and He preformed miracles everywhere He went, but being in Jerusalem was different. It was even more special if that was possible. They were excited to see how Jesus would rise to this occasion. But everything had gone horribly wrong. He was arrested. Rather than fighting back, Jesus allowed them to take Him into custody. A phony trial was put together in the middle of the night so they could find Him guilty without resistance and before they knew it, the one they had called Messiah and Son of God, was being led down a road to His death. He was hardly recognizable at that point, He had been beaten so badly, but it was Him. And He died a few short hours later.

The disciples went from being on top of the world to wanting to be dead themselves. They were questioning everything they ever knew about Jesus. They had invested 3 years in following this man everywhere He went. Had they wasted their time? Had they been sucked in by a charismatic con-man? Was this going to be their biggest regret in life? **Then Sunday morning came and changed everything all over again.**

### **The Two Mary's Honoring Jesus**

When we pick up in chapter 16 we see 2 of Jesus' followers Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of James were walking to the tomb. They too were devastated by the loss of Jesus. All their hopes and dreams were pinned up in Him as well just like the 11 Disciples. Despite all of the confusion, they loved Jesus and wanted to honor Him so on Sunday morning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after Jesus had died they set out to take care of Jesus' body and tomb. It was customary to anoint the body with oils and spices as the dead was being buried, however with the late hour that Jesus died on Friday it was put off. The two ladies would not have been able to go on Saturday as that is the Sabbath so they went first thing on Sunday morning. Just after sunrise, probably around 5:30 AM, the two Mary's went to go pay honor to Jesus. Recognize what this means. They had bought these spices for the body of Jesus b/c they expected to see Jesus' dead body. They were not expecting what they got when they arrived. As they walked they

were talking amongst themselves. **What were they talking about? “How exciting, the first Easter!” No, they walked to the tomb as if going to a funeral. They were going to pay respects to the dead not celebrate the living.**

### **Lifting Their Eyes to See a New World**

Can you picture these women walking up this rocky hill to Jesus’ tomb? They are talking with their heads down as they watch their footing to make sure they don’t trip over the many rocks. As they walked with heavy spirits and neared the tomb verse 4 tells us they lifted their eyes and saw the stone covering the tomb had been rolled away. **As they lifted their eyes they see a whole new world. A world where there is hope. A world where God has done what we thought would be impossible. A world in which death has been slain and conquered.** The burden they had been carrying about their beloved Jesus’ death is gone.

### **Jesus’ Messenger**

As they saw the stone rolled away they walk into the tomb for another surprise. An angel is in the tomb waiting for them. Waiting to announce to them the Gospel. **The word Gospel means good news. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of Jesus Christ is that He is not here, He has risen!** He is alive! The tomb was empty. The grave clothes that Jesus had been buried in were empty. The death they thought that had defeated Jesus was not strong enough to hold Him!

Our text tells us the women run from the tomb once the Angel gives them Jesus’ message. They are scared b/c of all they have just seen, but excited. They don’t talk to anyone, but go home so they can share the good news with the 11 Disciples.

### **Jesus Appears**

Mark does not record these details, they can be found in Luke, but Jesus comes back to the disciples and reveals Himself. He then takes time to explain all the misunderstandings they had. He explains why He had to die. He explains how He paid for sins. He fills in all the holes their theology and understanding had so they could take His message out to the world. What is that message? Jesus saves and Jesus lives!

### **Changed Men**

The Disciples were changed men after the Resurrection of Jesus. **Their faith had been restored and it was not a weak faith. It was a faith that drove them all over the known world to take this message of hope, grace and salvation to anyone and everyone they could. 11 of the 12 disciples ended up dying for their faith.** The only one who didn’t was John and he died after having been exiled to the island of Patmos for his faith and preaching of Jesus. Essentially, after the resurrection, the Disciples saw Jesus as so beautiful and worthy and true and loved Him so much they were all willing to give up their lives so that others could hear about Jesus. There was NOTHING that could stop them from sharing the Gospel message. There was nothing more TRUE than Jesus being alive.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION**

### **1. Faith in Jesus is not Misplaced**

As we think about the significance and importance of Jesus’ resurrection the first truth we see is that our faith in Jesus isn’t misplaced. Because Jesus rose again from the dead we can have faith in Jesus. Jesus had foretold of His resurrection on multiple occasions so **if He could not follow through on this why should we think He could follow through on anything else? Why would we think He could save us when He could not save Himself?** Jesus’ Resurrection is the proof that we need to know that the salvation He offers is real and can truly save us from the sin we have in our lives.

### **1 Corinthians 15:14**

**14** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Did you hear what Paul is saying? Faith in Jesus is in vain, it is a big waste of time, it is worthless, if He did not rise from the dead. **D.A. Carson, a Bible scholar writes, "The whole Bible pivots on one weekend 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem."** Christianity is a farce and a lie if Jesus did not rise again. Jesus is a liar if He did not rise again. You are better off figuring life out on your own if Jesus did not rise again from the dead. But He did!!!

### **2. Jesus' Saving Work is Effective**

Not only can we believe in the message of Jesus, but we can know that His saving work has power. Everything Jesus took care of on the cross when He was paying for sins wouldn't have amounted to anything had Jesus not risen from the dead.

### **1 Corinthians 15:17**

**17** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

If Jesus has not risen from the dead our sin problem, the thing that is going to bring God's righteous judgment upon us, has not been solved for. There is only forgiveness of sins if Jesus rose again.

### **Romans 4:25**

**25** who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Justification is being declared righteous. It is what means we will be able to stand before a holy God one day without fear of judgment. Paul says here it is not possible without Jesus rising again.

### **3. Jesus has been Validated by God**

Jesus' Resurrection is also a testimony that God approves and validates all of the work Jesus did on the cross.

### **Romans 1:4**

and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

How do we know that Jesus is really the Son of God? How do we know that what Jesus proclaimed to be true really is true? How do we know the salvation He offers is really going to save us from our sins? God declared Jesus to be true, to be God and thus to have the power to save through His Resurrection.

**The Resurrection is God's stamp of approval on Jesus' saving work on the cross.**

### **Empty Tomb People**

Jesus' resurrection is really the pinnacle of His work. As Christians we love the cross. We make necklaces out of it, put it on shirts, get tattoos, put them on the back of our cars, decorate our homes with them. We love the cross here at Southern Hills. It is a part of our logo b/c we love it so much. The cross is a powerful reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and payment on our behalf. However the cross means nothing without the empty tomb. The empty tomb is a symbol of Jesus' victory and power to save. Maybe we need more t-shirts, necklaces and tattoos of empty tombs. Jesus' resurrection is where we find our hope. So for that reason after service we will be giving away free neck tattoos of an empty

tomb. That is our gift to you!

Ok, not really, but we should look to the empty tomb and be reminded of all the hope we have b/c of it.

Let me close out our time in the Word tonight by helping us think through a few points of application. How should we be different b/c of Jesus' death and resurrection?

## **LIVING IT OUT – Applying God's Truth**

### **Have you put your faith in Jesus?**

Jesus did what He did on the cross to pay for your sins. He rose again from the grave to show He could follow through on His promises. He has done all the work and has made a gift of salvation available to you, what will you do with it? **Will you respond to it? Jesus tells us exactly how He wants us to respond.** We are to respond by confessing our sins to Him. We need to recognize we are not perfect and we don't have it all figured out. Then we should place our faith in Him to save us from the sin in our life that we can't take care of on our own.

Have you done this? There is no more important decision you will ever make in your life. Have you decided to put your faith in Jesus? Faith is not just a prayer, although it can be expressed that way. **Faith is not just a thought, although it produces thoughts of Jesus. Faith is something so central to who you are that it drives you to follow Jesus.** Will you make that decision tonight? Will you commit your life to Jesus so that He can give you life? I pray that if you are here tonight and you have not trusted Jesus for your salvation that you would. Maybe you have more questions. If you do I promise the Bible has the answers. Find me after service. I would love to talk to you further about it.

### **Are you in awe of Jesus?**

Christian, are you in awe of Jesus. **He gave up everything out of love for you. His power is big enough to overcome sin and death so that you will be able to overcome it as well.** Remembering all that Jesus did for us should simply put us in awe. We should be amazed that the God of the universe gave up all He gave up so that we could have a relationship with Him. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, His work has saved you! How amazing. Do you still think it is amazing or has its eternal ramifications and infinite scope been lost on you? Don't lose sight of how big and amazing Jesus is.

He is eternity's greatest hero saving us in ways that no one else could. He is not like the heroes we see on TV or the movies. He is real! He is not like the everyday heroes we see on the news. He is God. Be in awe.

### **Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Him?**

Jesus gave up everything so that we could have freedom from the bondage of sin. Are you content to spend this life living in the sin that Jesus died for or are you ready to fight the sin in your life as you strive to follow Jesus in all that you do. Jesus took up a cross and died for our sin. He calls us to take up our cross and die to our sins.

We have a reason to continue following. We serve a RISEN Savior. Our God is not dead! He is alive and that changes everything. We have reason to follow Him b/c we follow a God who has power over death and sin. He has power to forgive and reconcile. As big and powerful as He is, He loves us and so we press on.

### **Where do you find your hope?**

We often find comfort in this life when our bank account is at whatever goal we have. Others of us are

satisfied in life to know that we will have a roof over our heads. Some think life will always be ok so long as we have people that love us. The truth is that all of these things are fleeting. What is not fleeting is what Jesus offers us b/c of His work on the cross and His victorious resurrection. Put your hope in Jesus and you will never be disappointed.

### **Who is your Hero?**

**We worship heroes in our culture... from the big screen to those who make lofty promises in Washington DC to sports icons who inspire us to the family members or friends who always come through. Truth is that none of these heroes, as great as they may be, can save you from what you really need saving from.** You don't need a hero who can stop an asteroid from hitting Earth like Superman could have. You don't need a hero in government that will pass laws to make your life easier. You don't need a hero on the field that will bring your team victory. You don't even need that friend or family member who has your back. Those are all good things, don't get me wrong, but what you really need is a hero who can save your eternal soul.

### **CONCLUSION**

Jesus is eternity's greatest hero b/c He overcame our greatest enemy, sin, and offers us our greatest need, forgiveness and salvation. How will you respond to Jesus? **Will you respond with joy? Faith? Awe? Love? Commitment? Or will you walk away unchanged? Jesus' work on the cross and through the resurrection will only save those who believe. Put your faith in Him today.** There is salvation in no other name. Let's pray.