

Follow Me
Week 13: What Now?

I. Have you ever experienced something in your life so significant that it leaves you asking the question: What Now?

A. Maybe the event that comes to mind is a painful event?

Maybe the event that comes to mind is a joyful event?

Or maybe like most events that are extremely significant, it's a swirl of emotion that's hard to fully grasp.

1. It was a swirl of emotion that left me thinking: What Now?

B. Easter is a celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! It is a celebration of what the angel proclaimed in Mark 16:6 to a group of women that first encountered the empty tomb:

Mark 16:6 – 6 “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.

1. We have 4 different accounts of the Easter story given to us through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

All 4 accounts dovetail together to give us a very robust account of what happened on Easter Sunday.

They are distinct but complimentary accounts. This is important for us to acknowledge.

2. Mark’s gospel is profound because of what it omits rather than includes. There is no appearance of the resurrected Lord in Mark’s Easter account, and he does so intentionally. By omitting this fact of resurrection Sunday, Mark isn’t denying the reality of Jesus’s resurrection. Mark is bringing us to the empty tomb through the eyes of the women and confronting us with the same swirl of emotion they experienced. It’s the swirl of emotion that presents us with the same underlying question today:

What Now?

a. What will we do now in response to the empty tomb and the swirl of emotion that it inevitably evokes?

Maybe some today are considering the reality of the empty tomb for the first time? Maybe some are considering the empty tomb and evaluating what difference it is having on your life? Either way, Mark is making us confront the initial shock of the empty tomb and we must decide “what now?” in response to Jesus’s invitation to:

Come and follow me!

C. “What now?”, as we consider the resurrection of Jesus is the foundational question and our response to that question is the delineation of a Jesus follower. We are not following a man who lived an honorable life and taught us a great example of how to live. We are following God who became a man, lived the perfect life that we cannot live, and died in our place. Three days later He arose from the grave. “This Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, He is risen! He is not here!”

Nobody so no body and we must now decide what we are going to do with that reality.

1. What now?

Mark 16:1-8 – 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdelene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. 3 They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?” 4 Looking up, they noticed that the stone -which was very large- had been rolled away. 5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed. 6 “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’” 8 They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

This is how Mark ends his gospel account and it is meant to make us experience the same swirl of emotion. The women show up on Easter Sunday to anoint a dead body. No one was expecting a resurrection and upon arrival they are confronted with an empty tomb. They aren’t confronted with the resurrected Jesus but that is inferred by the absence of Jesus’s body. What they are observing is being confirmed.

The word of an angel gives testimony that the reason Jesus’s body is missing is because:

He has risen!

2. We can become so comfortable with the Easter story that we forget what it must have been like to experience these events. If Jesus, who was crucified, is now alive it changes everything! It still changes everything!
3. Mark is bringing us face to face with the empty tomb and he's not giving us the full story on how additional events will transpire. He gives us the chance to simply confront the empty tomb and ask ourselves the question that must have been going through these women's mind:
What Now?
4. When we don't have the full picture that can be a swirl of emotion. I take comfort in the mix of emotion that the ladies experienced, and we know they had because Scripture tells us. It's the raw emotion that we all likely have when something is happening that is so profound we have difficulty processing it. Mark gives us the range of emotions and he does so in the imperfect tense. That matters because the imperfect tense is a way to describe actions from within an event. Mark isn't giving us the complete picture; he is simply giving us the response of the women in the moment.

Mark 16:8 – 8 They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

5. So the women enter the tomb already perplexed that the stone has been removed. Jesus didn't need the stone to be removed to exit the grave, He wanted us to experience the empty tomb. When the women discover the body is gone, and an angel proclaiming what had occurred, their bodies went into trembling and astonishment. Trembling is the Greek word "tromos" and astonishment is the Greek word "ekstasis." Their bodies went into trauma and ecstasy. They likely went into shock so much so that they had what we would call:
An out of body experience.
 6. Their initial reaction was to flee from the tomb, and they stood close by in utter fear. Mark isn't giving us the rest of the story intentionally because he wants us to put ourselves in the shoes of these woman and ask ourselves the question:
What Now?
- D. To follow Jesus, we must come to terms with both the Son of God and the Son of Man being fully expressed through Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified and is now risen! This is a shocking claim that if embraced recognizes the full extent of God's love and power. It's an acknowledgment that Jesus reigns supreme and He is King. He has authority over everything including death.
1. But the account in Mark's gospel isn't intended to give the answer for us. We must sit in the tension or the swirl of emotion.
The empty tomb produces both trembling and ecstasy and a common reaction to something so grand is:
Fear
But that's not the only option. The other option is:
Faith
 2. We must all answer the question of "what now?" because the tomb is still empty! The empty tomb was an embarrassment to the Roman Empire and if there was a body to produce, they would have produced it! Jesus would confirm the empty tomb by revealing Himself in the flesh to over 500 people. The only logical explanation for a faith that is based on a resurrection to take root and spread across the known world is that the empty tomb was confirmed!
 3. It's not going to be facts that can give you the answer to what now. Facts are helpful and they certainly don't impede our vision of the empty tomb, but what Jesus calls us to exercise in response to His grace is our faith. Faith isn't the absence of doubt. Faith is an open heart that says, "Jesus, I want to follow You." Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross and He secured the victory over death.
Death couldn't lay claim to Him and He therefore walked out of the grave!
 4. What now? We have to decide what the empty tomb means for us.
We either walk away in disbelief or we respond in faith to follow Jesus.
We give our lives to the One who gave everything for us, and we follow into the abundant life.
- E. Easter is a great time of the year to decide to follow Jesus. We all begin at Easter and the reality of the empty tomb. The empty tomb reveals the risen Jesus. That's what our faith is about.

Not doing things the right way or knowing the right set of information.

We believe that Jesus paid it all and He extends new life to us because He alone defeated death.

1. What now?

- a. I hope you'll make the decision to follow if you haven't before. You simply confess that Jesus is Lord, and you believe in His death and resurrection. "Jesus, I believe, and I want to follow You."**
- b. If we have already trusted Jesus and are following Him, then we praise Him and we celebrate because He's given us life through His death and resurrection! The empty tomb has secured our eternal life! And it begins now as we find true life in giving ours away in response to the One who has given us everything!**