

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Learning from Those Who Walked Before Us

WOMEN AT THE CROSS AND EMPTY TOMB

Mark 15:37-16:10

INTRODUCTION: What a glorious and special day it is as we focus our attention on both the cross and the empty tomb. Because each of those, the cross on the one hand, and the empty tomb on the other hand, carry such great significance to Christians theologically, we most often talk about them at different times.

But the cross and the empty tomb go together, and either one without the other is incomplete.

Jesus' death upon the cross is the act that provides our eternal redemption.

The empty tomb is the ultimate evidence that Jesus was and is the Son of God who could conquer death and the grave.

But the cross only provides redemption for us if the One who died upon it was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves He was and is the Son of God, even if He died some way besides death upon the cross, but we would be left without redemption, forgiveness, or the gift of eternal life.

As Hebrews 9:22 declares, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

Together, the cross and the empty tomb are the culmination and fulfillment of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Luke 19:10 NKJV ... the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

This morning I want us to begin at the cross and move to the empty tomb. Since we are looking at those who have gone before us who can be examples to us, I want us to take note of who showed up at both places.

Who was it that was willing to go to a gruesome public execution when they knew that watching it would nearly rip their heart from their chest?

Who was it who also went to the place they buried Jesus simply because their love and adoration of Him did not fade with His death?

The answer is the women!

Join me in reading the account the Holy Spirit sent through Mark as he wrote his gospel.

Mark 15:37-41 NKJV We start on Mount Calvary.

37 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

38 Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

40 There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, 41 who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Mark 16:1-10 NKJV Now we move to the tomb.

1 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother of James*, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

2 Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is 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 into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

9 Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.

WHO WERE THE WOMEN WHO WERE AT BOTH THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE EMPTY TOMB?

Taking notes from all of the gospel accounts, not just Mark which we read, we come up with the following names:

- **Mary Magdalene**
 - Magdalene means that she came from the town of Magdala in Galilee, located on the coast of the Sea of Galilee.
 - Mentioned 12 times in the gospels, all but one of those in connection with the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.
 - Only 1 verse about her before these events.
 - What most people think they know about Mary Magdalene comes not from Scripture but from tradition, and it may not be correct.

- Tradition says that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute before she came to Jesus, and
- That she was the unnamed woman of Luke 7 who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair.
- Either or both of these things may possibly be true, but the Scripture does not specifically link either of these descriptions to Mary Magdalene. There is some historical evidence that the claim that these things were true of Mary Magdalene did not begin until the Middle Ages.
- What the gospels do say is that Jesus cast seven demons out of her and then she began to follow Jesus and the disciples wherever they went.
- She, along with other women who were apparently wealthy, followed Jesus around Galilee and ultimately to Jerusalem. They all used their substance to provide food and other necessities for their Lord and the 12 apostles.
- Mary Magdalene was a woman with an intense gratitude for what Jesus had done in her life. She responded by following Him and using the resources God had entrusted to her care for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
- **Joanna**
 - Joanna was the wife of Chuza, the steward of King Herod Antipas, king of Galilee and Perea.
 - Joanna also was a woman of considerable means as was Mary Magdalene, and they may have even been friends prior to coming to Christ.
 - The Bible also says that Joanna was healed of evil spirits and infirmities, as was Mary Magdalene.
 - She like Mary, left Galilee to follow Jesus to Jerusalem where she became a witness to the crucifixion and resurrection.
- **Salome, the mother of James and John, and the wife of Zebedee**
 - Salome was the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' more prominent disciples.
 - She is the one who requested that her sons be allowed to sit at Jesus' right hand.
- **Mary, the mother of James the less and Joses**
 - Two men named James were disciples of Jesus.
 - One was the brother of John, a son of Zebedee and Salome.
 - The other was James the son of Alpheus and brother of Joses (Joseph). James the less was an apostle; Joses was not.

- He apparently was younger than James the son of Zebedee, so he was called James the less, or James the younger.
- This Mary was his mother.
- She is sometimes called in the gospels “the other Mary.”
- **Other unnamed women**
 - There were other women as well whose names are not given.
 - All of these were in the same group of women like Mary Magdalene and Joanna that had been following Jesus as He ministered in Galilee, and now they had followed Him out of Galilee to Jerusalem where He had told them He must be crucified and raised from the dead.

WHAT HAPPENED THAT WAS SO UNUSUAL?

- From everything we read in the gospels up to the point of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, we would expect that some or all of the eleven remaining apostles would be the first ones to go to Calvary and the first ones to witness the resurrection.
- But they are not!
 - **The first to hear of the resurrection from the angels were the women.**
 - **The first to see the risen Lord was Mary Magdalene.**
 - **The first to touch the risen Lord was Mary Magdalene.**
 - **The first to believe in the resurrected Christ were some of the women.**

Notice that we are not talking here about God including a token woman. We do not have among the first witnesses, three apostles and one woman. We do not even have two and two. All of the very first witnesses to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus were the women who followed Him. Now later God included us men, praise God; but the first were the women!

- **This is a testimony to the veracity of the resurrection accounts.**
 - Women were not highly regarded in N.T. times.
 - They could not be a witness in a court of law.
 - If someone were going to make up an account and manufacture a story in those days, they would never invent one that depended on women as the witnesses.
 - Yet all four gospels agree: The first witnesses to the resurrection were the women who followed Jesus.
 - Why? Because that is the way it was! They were not inventing fables or tales; the gospel writers were simply telling what happened.

- And God decided the women would be the first witnesses to the pivotal event in the history of the world, the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS STRANGE TURN OF EVENTS?

- **We see that God does not have a favorite gender.**

- Both man and woman are created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27 NKJV So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

- Being male or female does not affect one's relationship or fellowship with God.

Galatians 3:26-29 NKJV 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- That does not mean that there are not differences between male and female.

- They are made differently.

- They think differently.

- They act differently.

- God has assigned to each certain roles and responsibilities both in the home and in the church.

- But one is not superior to the other in any regard.

- And the fact is that God chose the women who were faithful to follow Jesus all the way to the cross were the ones God allowed to be the first witnesses to the resurrection ...

- **We see the blessings of faithfulness.**

- As we learned from the man Jonah about the sovereignty of God over a world in which the Almighty has granted mankind limited free will, so here men and women alike can learn of the blessings that come to those who are faithful by looking at the lives of these faithful women!

- Ladies, it is often times your faithfulness that God uses to build the Kingdom of God.

- Now praise God for all of you ladies that have a godly husband who is the spiritual leader of your family. That is the way it should be, and I would desire that for every one of you.

- But for those of you who at this moment do not enjoy that blessing. Maybe you are a widow, or divorced, or never married; or maybe you have a husband who is not yet the man of God he ought to be ...
- Do not under estimate the value of your faithfulness to the Kingdom of God.
- Most or all of these women that witnessed the resurrection did not have a godly husband at home. They were just like some of you. If there was going to be a spiritual influence in their household, they had to provide it; and they did!
- And God blessed their faithfulness.

I told you early on today that **Together, the cross and the empty tomb are the culmination and fulfillment of Jesus' earthly ministry – to seek and to save those who are lost.**

Last week we saw Peter's life transformed by the cross and resurrection from being a coward to being a bold preacher of the gospel.

Mary Magdalene was changed from being a haven for demonic spirits to being set free.

The cross and resurrection have changed me too.

I was a sceptic and critic but through Christ I am a steadfast believer in God's Word.

What does your sign say?

What were you without Christ? What are you now in Christ, because of the cross and resurrection?

Does your sign say what you want it to say, what God wants it to say?

It can.