

9-22-19

The God Who Shows Up

Mark 16:1-8

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace!” Those are some of the most radical lyrics ever written! I mean, what would happen if the majority of the world did this and the things of earth were no longer the most important thing? Economies would collapse! But here’s something to think about: when you face the most difficult times in your life, it’s not the stuff from Amazon that shows up at your front door that’s gonna get you through! It’s only when God Almighty shows up that you can know you’re going to make it, no matter what this old world has thrown your way!!! And here’s the great and good news: we serve a God who shows up when we need Him most! The followers of Jesus discovered this in a big way, just a few days after Jesus was crucified. Let’s pray and ask God to show us today how He is the God who shows up!! Pray!

Today, we will end our study of the Gospel According to Mark with the first 8 verses of Mark 16, but we will also reference events from the other Gospels. Before we get started, I wanted to share with you two quick things. First of all, some of you may have a version without Mark 16:9-20 and some of you may have them in your version. These verses are not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts, however, many scholars simply believe that the original ending of the Gospel According to Mark was lost, and at some point, a consecrated and dedicated Christian writer drew from the other Gospel accounts and placed these verses as an ending to the Gospel Account. Therefore, there’s nothing wrong or contradictory about these verses, but since we will be utilizing the other Gospels in our message today, much like the writer of the ending of Mark’s Gospel did, we will not cover these verses in detail.

The second thing I want to tell you is this. Today’s message has been heavily influenced by a wonderful man of God, James M. Richardson, who I had the privilege of meeting before He went home to be with the Lord! I have also had the privilege of being his daughter and son-in-law’s pastor for around 17 years. That would be Keith and Vivien Baty! Some years ago Vivien gave me a book her Dad had written. I was very moved by the message of the book. Later on, she gave me a box of the books that had never been distributed. Our message today, is heavily influenced by this book and I believe leads us to a fitting end to our study of the Gospel of Mark. I’ll quote extensively from this small, yet powerful book! I’ve divided the books between the first and second service, so if you would like one of the books, after the service, they will be at the connect center and you can pick on up as long as supplies last! So let’s go ahead and read our text today, Mark 16:1-8...

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body.

Mark 16:2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb

Mark 16:3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

Mark 16:4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

Mark 16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

Mark 16:6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

Mark 16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Mark 16:8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

So the young man dressed in a white robe tells the women to tell the disciples, and specifically Peter, that He was going ahead of them into Galilee and that they would see Him, just as He had promised! So here's a question you might be wondering about...

Did He Show Up?

The answer is, YES. There were five appearances on the day of His resurrection, and at least six on the days that followed. There were numerous eye witness accounts. Today we will discover "The God who shows up!" Again, I thank Dr. James M. Richardson for direction on this message and for the numerous quotes you will hear from his book today.

The God Who Shows Up For The Sinful

Mark 16:9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

Mark 16:10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.

Mary Magdalene/Quick background

In the early days of His ministry He had met Mary Magdalene and set her free from demonic possession. Under the influence of this possession Mary Magdalene had become morally irresponsible and fallen in to a destructive lifestyle. Jesus set her free and she followed Him throughout His ministry. It was to this woman, who many had written off as worthless, that Jesus first appeared. John's Gospel recounts it this way...

John 20:10 Then the disciples went back to their homes,

John 20:11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb

John 20:12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

John 20:13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

John 20:14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 20:15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

John 20:18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Dr. James M. Richardson gives this amazing insight...

"His presence is not given only to those who are worthy, or perceptive, or brilliant or even good. He makes Himself known, and His presence felt, to the one who loves Him. Love was all she had to offer, but she could never forget what He had done for her."

You may be here today thinking you've done too much wrong, crossed a line, a point of no return, that there's no hope for you, but Jesus shows up for the sinner when he or she confesses their sinfulness and cries out to the Savior for forgiveness. Call on Him and He will respond with a cleansing flood and you, like Mary Magdalene, will have the testimony, "I have seen the Lord!" Remember this...

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The God Who Shows Up For The Bewildered!

Can you imagine how bewildered the followers of Jesus must have been. Their leader had been crucified, murdered, if you will, and all because of trumped up charges. They had seen Him work miracles, heal the sick, and even raise the dead. But for some reason He didn't work a miracle for Himself. They were bewildered beyond reason. We discover this in Luke's Gospel...

Luke 24:13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

Luke 24:14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

Luke 24:15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;

Luke 24:16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

Luke 24:17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

Luke 24:18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

Luke 24:19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

Luke 24:20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;

Luke 24:21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

Luke 24:22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning

Luke 24:23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.

Luke 24:24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

Luke 24:25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

Luke 24:26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Dr. Richardson gives us this compelling insight...

"It is His way to find us where we are. He knew that they were searching for some kind of understanding that they could live with...Carefully, He began with things they could identify with and understand – Moses and the prophets – and went on, showing that all Scripture moves toward the crucified Savior...'He was,' the risen Christ said, 'David's king, Solomon's altogether lovely, Isaiah's Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Jeremiah's branch of righteousness, Ezekiel's plant of renown, Daniel's stone cut without hands, Joel's hope, Jonah's fulfillment, Habakkuk's anointed, Malachi's refiner's fire and Sun of righteousness."

Some of you in this very room have either been or are now bewildered by some life event! Maybe, like these little known disciples, you have been slammed by the tragedy of losing a loved one. Maybe you've lost of your health, or a relationship, or a job you thought would be a career. And you may have had more than one at the same time. This old world can be cruel, but regardless of what has you bewildered, Jesus will show up to help you, but He will not force you to accept His help. But if you let Him your eyes will be opened. Check out the rest of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus...

Luke 24:28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther.

Luke 24:29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

Luke 24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

Luke 24:31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together

Luke 24:34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Luke 24:35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

The God Who Shows Up For The Skeptic!

Ever had those doubts that just won't go away? You're not alone.

One of Jesus' disciples had this problem. Thomas is sometimes called "Doubting Thomas." John's Gospel records this...

John 20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

John 20:20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

John 20:23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

John 20:24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

John 20:25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Here's some special words to the skeptic you might be surprised to hear a preacher say. "Blunt Honesty" is appreciated by God! Dr. Richardson states that "Doubt is not a forbidden activity." He goes on to quote Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who said – "There lives more faith in honest doubt, than in half the creeds." Dr. Richardson then says...

"God does not condemn honest questioning. Perhaps he would not have made this appearance had Thomas's problem been a fashionable skepticism (sometimes a cover-

up for permissive behavior)” Dr. Richardson also said this... “Obviously, doubts come for a variety of reasons. The mystery of the supernatural and the sometimes unreal quality of spiritual things can cause confused thinking and unwise reaction. The things that happen to us or others because we live in a world where God’s laws have been violated, or because we cannot see beyond today, often puzzle us into a doubting frame. Sometimes personal disobedience or careless living cause us to move onto a realm where our aloneness or our rebellion suggest to us that this gospel may really be fantasy. Most who think they have lost their faith have not done so by reasoned argument, they have simply drifted, with little resistance, into doubt.”

John Cooper, lead singer for the band Skillet, back on August 13, posted a powerful blog on Facebook, which addressed the recent departure of some high profile leaders in Christian Worship circles from the faith. Cooper stated...

“...as these influencers disavow their faith, they always end their statements with their ‘new insight/new truth’ that is basically a regurgitation of Jesus’s words?! It’s truly bizarre and ironic. They’ll say “I’m disavowing my faith but remember, love people, be generous, forgive others”. Ummm, why? That is actually not human nature. No child is ever born and says “I just want to love others before loving myself. I want to turn the other cheek. I want to give my money away to others in need”. Those are bible principles taught by a prophet/Priest/king of kings who wants us to live by a higher standard which is not an earthly standard, but rather the ‘Kingdom of God’ standard.”

Cooper ends his blog with this...

“Is it any wonder that some of our disavowed Christian leaders are letting go of the absolute truth of the Bible and subsequently their lives are falling apart? Further and further they are sinking in the sea all the while shouting “now I’ve found the truth! Follow me!!” Brothers and sisters in the faith all around the world, pastors, teachers, worship leaders, influencers...I implore you, please please in your search for relevancy for the gospel, let us NOT find creative ways to shape Gods word into the image of our culture by stifling inconvenient truths. But rather let us hold on even tighter to the anchor of the living Word of God. For He changes NOT. “The grass withers and the flowers fade away, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8)”

It’s okay to ask questions, and to even be skeptical when you are trying to discern what is true and what is not. I just want to encourage you to remember, just because truth may seem illusive and difficult to discern, doesn’t mean truth is non-existent! Never stop seeking truth, because Jesus promised...

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

The God Who Shows Up For The Failure!

Peter felt like a failure. He had denied the one who he had come to love and trust. Remember what Peter had done?

Luke 22:61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."

Luke 22:62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.

But listen to the guys who had seen Jesus on the Road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:34 ... "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Jesus evidently met with Simon Peter alone. It was His way of dealing with Peter's despair and depression over failure. Later, on the shores of the sea of Tiberias, Jesus gives Peter a chance to publicly state his love and commitment to Jesus.

John 21:13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

John 21:14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

John 21:15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

John 21:16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

John 21:17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Dr. Richardson shares this powerful word about Peter...

"The creative force involved in being forgiven led him on to new hope about himself and his purpose for being. So he moved on out, and the record in Acts literally explodes with pictures of this weak man made strong and powerful, this impulsive man made more and more steady, this fearful man made bold and single-purposed. At Pentecost this new dynamic burst forth in that great testimony which resulted in three thousand new believers. In the Jerusalem jail this new courage asserted itself as he fearlessly declared to the authorities that this good news would continue to be preached no matter what the price."

Before the resurrection, as we saw last week, Peter was questioned about Jesus and in fear for his life, he cursed and denied he ever even knew Jesus. However, something happened after Jesus' death that changed everything. Peter eventually died because he would not back down from his belief that Jesus had risen and he was not the only one.

Many of those early followers chose death over denial. What could cause this change in Peter. Only one thing. God showed up.

The God Who Shows Up For YOU!

God wants so much to be a part of your life. He wants to show up for you and be a part of your life in the good times and the bad. I love the way the prophet Zephaniah describes God's presence with us...

Zep 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Maybe today you can relate to Mary Madeline, the sinner. Just admit that you need forgiveness and ask Jesus to forgive. He will show up for you!!

Maybe today you can relate to the bewildered. Life has tossed you some tough circumstances. You've tried, but just can't figure it all out. Let Jesus talk to you through His word. You will end up saying, "Didn't His words burn in my heart."

Maybe today you relate more to the skeptic. Remember, God has no problem with honest doubt. I would say to you, are you willing to take your honest doubts to God. Are you willing to give Him a chance to show up for you and give you some honest answers? If you do, you may find yourself, as did C.S. Lewis, who was once an atheist, "surprised by joy."

Maybe you relate today to the failure. Please let Jesus take your failures and turn them into the lessons that will inform your future success. We have all failed in one way or another, however, Jesus forgives, strengthens, loves and empowers us by His Spirit to become all that He created us to be. Let Jesus show up for you today. He is...

The God who shows up for the sinful!
The God who shows up for the bewildered!
The God who shows up for the skeptic!
The God who shows up for the failure!
The God who shows up for you!

And next week we will begin a series called Mission Critical on The Book of Acts which will highlight...

The God who shows up for the church!

Let's pray!