

Mark 16:1-8

Date: Easter Sunday, 4 April 2021

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Sermon: Enjoying Our Relationship with Christ

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Passage

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, 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.

Transcript

Coffee

I'm not sure whether you know this, but it seems to me that most pastors that I know list coffee as a hobby. I secretly wonder whether it's because it's the only legal and socially acceptable drug that pastors can use. If you saw a drunk or high pastor you'd be worried. But a pastor whose addicted to coffee, they must be doing some great work for Jesus, right!? Don't get me wrong, I really enjoy a cup of coffee, but I was talking to a friend and reflecting on how perhaps, I could be in danger of delighting in coffee more than Jesus.

In this past week, in my bible reading, I was reading from Psalm 37. Do you know what it says? It says this,

*Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. **Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Psalm 37:1-7 (ESV)*

Do you hear that line in the middle? You might have missed it but it says this, Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. That's incredible isn't it? And I wonder whether we are people who delight in the LORD above all else. Delight in Jesus above coffee, above money, above our holidays.

This weekend is Easter. And it's a time to give thanks to God for what he has done through his son Jesus Christ. How Jesus came into the world as a human baby, even though he's the son of God, and how he lived on the earth, and then he died on the cross and risen three days later from the grave. We give thanks for salvation, we have been forgiven of our sins, we have been set free and we look forward to eternal life. You know, John 3:16, for God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall no perish but have eternal life.

Many of us here have put our faith in Jesus Christ. And on Friday, we talked about the importance of dying to oneself, to take up one's cross and to follow Jesus. But the more I think about all this, I wonder where is joy? Today is resurrection Sunday, Easter Sunday, where we celebrate how Jesus conquered death, sin and Satan. Death could not keep him in the ground and he rose from the grave! That's exciting news. I was once at a church, and one of my friends became a follower of Jesus. The change in him was extraordinary. Overnight, there was such a joy in his life. It's easy for us to give thanks this weekend but then forget about Jesus the rest of the year. So how are we to respond to this Easter message after today?

Delighting in Jesus

Today, I want to talk about delighting in Jesus, because it's something that we as a church, as individuals may not consider as very important or find challenging. But it's something that we need to talk about because the Scriptures, the New Testament talks about it. As you know, we as a church have been going through the Gospel of Mark in the first half of this year. And it's incredible what Jesus does, he heals, he raises people from the dead, he casts out demons.

But apart from the miracles that Jesus did, he also taught didn't he? He taught us what it means to follow him. What it means to be a disciple of Jesus. On Friday, we saw that that means to die to yourself. To give up your own self interests and to follow Jesus. But it's not a sad, joyless life to follow Jesus. There is much joy to be found when we learn to delight in Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark, it says,

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:28-31 (ESV)*

I wonder, as we reflect on what Jesus has done for us, especially this weekend, we are growing in our love for Him? Are we growing in our delight for him? There's many things that we can love, that we can delight in. Maybe we delight in our intellect, how smart we are? Or maybe we delight in how good looking we are? Or how

much money we have? Or what our money does? But are we delighting in Jesus? Can there be anything more sacrificial, selfless, or amazing as what he did for us?

If we are to take Easter seriously... if we are to take the good news of Jesus, what he did some 2,000 years ago seriously, then it should change us completely from the inside out. I'll give you an example. For Rachel, and I use this with her permission, she was diagnosed with lupus when she was in university. She was on a mission trip up to Tweed Heads, and she came down with rheumatoid arthritis. One of her friends who was on the trip with her said, Oh you might have lupus. Rachel asks her doctor to test her for it, and the doctor reluctantly agrees saying that they usually don't test for lupus. All of a sudden, Rachel's world is turned upside down when she's diagnosed with an incurable illness where she will take medication for, for the rest of her life. And Rachel's outlook on life has changed because of it. For example, for me, I'll be concerned about saving as much money as possible. For her, because of her lupus, she has a completely different outlook on money. She doesn't worry about it. She uses it for the kingdom, she's generous with it.

If we are to take Easter seriously, it should also change our perspective on life. It should change us. It should change our priorities in life. In fact, it should change us so that we want to love Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, it should change us so that we are selfless and we seek to love others as ourselves. Just as Jesus summarises the Ten Commandments. If we take Easter seriously, it should change our desires. I wonder whether we love Jesus with everything of our being? Or do we coast through Easter, do we coast through the year and say, "Yeah, thanks Jesus for saving me," and then we get on with our lives, worrying and fretting about trivial things. We start delighting in sports, or we continue delighting in the amount of money, or the number of holidays that we go on. Don't get me wrong, these are good gifts from God above, but we may distract ourselves with the gifts rather than the giver.

I'll give you an example, some of you know this story, but I went to Melbourne about ten years ago for work. And I absolutely loved my time down there because of the freedom I had. But towards the end of my time there, I found myself in difficulty because I didn't have a car. I was living in a suburb which had trams, but it was difficult for me to get around. All of a sudden, my dad calls me up and tells me that he wants to give me his old car. That he had been thinking about the difficulties I found myself in and he wanted to help me out. I was very thankful for what my dad did. But let me ask you, do you think it would have been rude if I didn't say thanks?

Or if my focus was solely on the car, and I had forgotten my dad who was generous? Of course it would have been rude, it would have been disrespectful, it would have been unloving to my dad. Instead, what I really should do is to enjoy my relationship with my dad. I would want to spend more time with him. Not because I want to get more, but because I realise my father loves me, and I love him.

I wonder, whether we are like that with Easter. We say to God our Father, "Thanks for salvation through Jesus." And then we go off with our lives, forgetting our Father, forgetting Jesus, when the right response would be to enjoy the relationship we have with him. Instead, we go off obsessing over the gifts that have been given, forgetting the giver. When the right and proper response is to love him, to delight in him. I pray that this Easter would be different, we would learn to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Because loving Jesus, delighting in him is the best thing that we could ever do. The problem is that we seem to delight in things that are trivial. I'm reminded of what a famous Christian and what he said once, he said, that we are like children playing in the mud, refusing to let go of the mud. When our parents want to take us to the beach, and enjoy the ocean. I wonder whether many of us find ourselves delighting in trivial things not realising that there is great joy in delighting in Jesus.

Especially when we consider the amazing gift Jesus has given us through his life, death and resurrection. Just consider this. The fact that because of Jesus, if you put your trust in him, you have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Through Jesus you have inherited the kingdom of God. You have the forgiveness of your sins, there is no longer any guilt, or shame. There is now no condemnation. You can now call God your Heavenly Father. Your heavenly dad. You have now been adopted into the family of God, you can now call Jesus your brother, you can call other believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, you have eternal life. You don't need to be afraid, you can be strong and courageous. You can be confident that your Heavenly Father hears your prayers and he will answer you in his goodness and perfect timing. All that because Jesus died and rose again. How amazing is that?

A Challenge

I want to end it here by talking briefly about how we can delight in Jesus. How we can love Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. I want to encourage you by suggesting our relationship with Jesus is a little bit like your relationship with a

loved one, like your spouse. There are times when you are listening to your loved one. There are times when I'm talking to Rachel. Something occurred on our trip away actually, there was a day when Rachel was a little tired from a lack of sleep, and she was a little quiet. And at that point, I was asking her, "Why aren't you talking?" To be honest, I was finding it a little awkward. And it was at that point that Rachel said to me that in our relationship it's usually her that's talking. And I realised then that I too need to talk. Maybe for some of you, you're the talker and you need to do more listening to your loved one. For others here, you're the listener, but you need to do more talking.

In our relationship with Jesus, we can often do the talking, but how often are we listening to Him? We can often talk to Him about our problems, our concerns, and that's a good thing but do we listen to Him? How much are you in the Word, the Scriptures? Spend time reading the Word because that is where we get to learn to delight in Jesus.

So why not start doing that today? As you get home this Easter Sunday, why not spend time reading his Word, and praying. Give thanks for what he's done for you through his life, death and resurrection! Spend time, delighting in Jesus, loving him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And let's not make this a once a year thing. Let's keep delighting in Him everyday of our lives. Let's pray.