

The Fitting End to Mark's Gospel

Scripture: Mark 16:9–20

Code: 41-85

Well it was February of 1969 on a rainy Sunday when I showed up at Grace Church in my late twenties with no idea of what the future held. As I said, there were a couple of things in my mind. One was to teach the Scripture verse-by-verse and the other was to train men. God has brought to a fruition of some kind, anyway, both of those desires in ways that are way beyond anything I ever imagined.

I was prepared to teach the Bible seriously, but joyfully. I was prepared to teach it verse-by-verse, word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase and letter-by-letter, if necessary, because I was compelled on one great foundation, by one great motivation. I believe...I believed it then, I believe it now...that when I held a Bible in my hands, I actually held THE living Word of God. I believe that. I have always believed that. And my faith in the accuracy and integrity of Scripture is stronger every passage of my life.

I suppose I could have started out at Grace Church by doing a rather long defense of the Scripture. I didn't do that. I didn't do that because I didn't need to do that. The Scripture will defend itself. It is its own defense. It's like a lion, you just open the cage and let it out.

I don't need to tell you this is the living Word of God, you know it is. There is no other explanation for it when you really dig down. It is so obviously divine. I'm really building on the work of others. I'm kind of the last guy in the process. My task has been to tell you what the Bible means. That's really the end of the process. Before I can do that, I have to have the Bible. And before I can say this is the Word of God, and you can see that it is the Word of God, it has to be the Word of God.

What you hold in your hand right now, your Bible, I can tell you is an accurate, English translation of the original manuscripts written by the authors of the Bible. It is accurate. If I didn't believe that we had an accurate translation of the original text of Holy Scripture, why would I endeavor to explain it verse-by-verse and word-by word? It's very, very essential and very foundational to understand that what you have in your hand in a twentieth century, if you had the NAS, or twenty-first century if you have the ESV, English translation is an accurate translation of texts that originated thousands of years ago. And the reason that I can say that is true is because I understand the science and the history of manuscripts and the passing down of Holy Scripture. That is one of the most important things you learn in seminary because if you have any wavering in your confidence about the integrity of your translation of the Bible, it will suck the conviction right out of your heart. That is why those who attack the truth, attack first the veracity of Scripture. Because if the Bible can be shown to be inaccurate, or an inadequate translation, or wrong, then we have no assurance of anything.

So the basic question for anybody who is going to give their entire life to the study of Scripture is, is the Scripture accurate? Now I will confess to you, I'm not limited to the English translation. I took a minor in college in Greek, twenty-four units of Greek, so that I could read the New Testament in its

original Greek language. Came to seminary and took more and more and more Greek and threw in Hebrew, so that I could be familiar with the original language in which the Scriptures were written, Old Testament and New Testament. But that is the foundation. That is why that's so important in seminary. And I can tell you this, that I started out believing the Bible is the Word of God, and I ended up believing that the Bible is the Word of God even more strongly. Not because I've studied the science of manuscripts through the years, but because I've studied the Bible and it is its own greatest defense.

Now that leads me to have you turn to the book of Mark because here somebody might say, "That issue of accuracy is called into question." Because there is this odd ending of Mark, starting in verse 9 and running down to verse 20, you see a section in brackets, a bracket before the word "now" in verse 9, and a bracket after the word "followed" in verse 20. And if you have a New American Standard, or an English Standard Version, even if you have a New King James Version, there will be a note in the margin explaining that this is a variant, this is a text that has been added to Mark. That is a most providential way to end our 43-year study because now that you have 43 years, those of you who have endured it all, 43 years of absolute unshakable confidence in the veracity of Scripture, we can talk about the science of it.

This section at the end provides a very rich opportunity for Bible students to be strengthened in the confidence that the Bible that they hold in their hands is accurate. This section allows us to do something we've never done in 43 years, and that is to go behind the text, below the text, the cherished English translation that you have come to love and to dig down into the history of the ancient manuscripts on which all modern translations in all languages are based. You hold in your hands that precious Bible and you don't even think about the fact that there's an entire history behind it...a long history, a long history of careful preservation of the original manuscripts, the original text, so that thousands of years later when you read your Bible, you can trust that you have an accurate translation of the original.

This is the first element in the mind of a Bible student, what did God say? Do I have His actual words? Then we can talk about the second element, what does God mean? And that's where I come in. But first, we have to know what He said, then we can talk about what He means.

All translations of Scripture, all of them, are based on ancient sources...ancient sources that have been discovered in libraries throughout ancient times, treasures for those libraries. They have been discovered, they have been studied, they have been analyzed for their accuracy. They have been compared by the most fastidious, dutiful, thoughtful, careful scholars through the centuries so that I can say to you, unequivocally, the Bible you hold in your hand, if you have formal equivalency, an actual translation, I can assure you, you have an accurate...an accurate Bible.

The Holy Spirit, who is the author of Scripture, inspiring every writer of Scripture, is also the preserver of Scripture. Supernaturally, He moved on the writers without disrupting their own words and thoughts and ideas so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write. He moved on the preservers to make sure that the Scripture stayed pure for history.

The printing press didn't show up till around 1500. Everything up to that time was copied by hand. Scribes understood the seriousness of what they did. There are some amazing stories about scribes, listen to this, copying down the Hebrew Old Testament who wrote one letter, left, and took a bath. Came back, wrote another letter, left, and took a bath, and did that until they had written the whole

Old Testament. Sort of ceremonial cleansing to remind them after every letter of the importance and the sacredness of what they were copying.

At first, they were copying the original texts, written by Moses, written by David, written by Isaiah, written by Paul, written by Paul, James, Mark, Luke. They knew what they had in their hands and they copied it carefully because they understood it was Holy Scripture. Now, today, we have...let's just take the New Testament cause that's where we've been working, we have twenty-five thousand ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, twenty-five thousand. You say, "Is that all there..." Oh no, I couldn't even begin to tell you how many there were that disappeared over the centuries, but there are twenty-five thousand that are extant, that now exist. This is an abundance of manuscripts by which we can compare them all and come to the accurate understanding that we need. Such an abundance shows how the Holy Spirit preserved everything. That was the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Old Testament manuscripts. When they were found, they were written before the time of Christ and they are matched to the translations we have today, showing how the Holy Spirit preserved Scripture.

Nothing...nothing in ancient literature, even comes close to the mass of manuscripts that we have on the New Testament. And what they demonstrate is the uniformity and the consistency. There are, as I said, twenty-five thousand ancient manuscripts. There are five thousand, six hundred or so Greek manuscripts and they go way back. We have Greek manuscripts from the second century, from the third century. Our Lord lived in the first century. There is a manuscript called P-52 and they're numbered and named according to the people who found them, or the location, or something like that. This one called P-52 has parts of the gospel of John and it dates from 100 to 150 and John was living in the nineties. Somebody copied an original, most likely, or a copy of an original, very near the original.

There is another papyrus, they were writing on papyrus so they're called papyri, there's another one called the Bodmer Papyri in which we find John and Luke and it dates from 175 to 225. And then there's the very famous papyrus called the Chester Beatty papyrus that has all four gospels and the book of Acts and it dates around 200. They go way back.

Here's the amazing part. There probably shouldn't be a lot of manuscripts from those early years. Why? Because second century in particular and the third century, for sure, was a time of immense Christian persecution, and an effort to stamp out Christianity by the destruction of Christians and Christian scriptures. But the Lord preserved these ancient texts, copies of those very close to the original.

Once you get into the fourth century, around 325, or so, you get Constantine making Christianity legal. The persecution ends and now manuscripts proliferate. They're everywhere. And so by the time you pass say 325, the Council of Nicea, we begin to see manuscripts in abundance.

The two most important ones, one is called, it's a Codex, this is called a Codex because it is a bound volume, rather than a scroll. The first one that is very important is called Sinaiticus and it's about 350 and it's the whole New Testament. The second important one is called Vaticanus, 325 and it's the whole Bible. By the way, both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end Mark at verse 8.

We also have eight thousand ancient copies of the New Testament in Latin called the Vulgate. And

the Vulgate dates from 382 to 405. We also have 350-plus copies of the Bible in Syriac that goes back to the 200's. If I'm belaboring this a little bit, I'm going to tell you why. We have all these ancient manuscripts that when compared all say the same thing. The early church fathers, for example, before 325 because there was the Council of Nicea in 325, they're called the ante nicene fathers because they were before Nicea, the early fathers in the 200's and 300's, if you just read...there were these guys writing all kinds of theology, and all kinds of biblical study material, if you take the church fathers prior to 325, there are among those fathers about 32 thousand quotes from the New Testament. There are so many quotes from the New Testament among those fathers in the writings of the fathers, which we have, which are held in libraries, that we can reconstruct the complete New Testament from nothing but the writings of the fathers. That's another source to find what the New Testament said in ancient times.

The writings of the early church fathers also confirm the accuracy of the gospels. There are over nineteen thousand quotations from the gospels in the writings of the fathers. So whether you're reading a Greek manuscript, a Syriac Bible, or whether you're looking at a Latin Vulgate or whether you're reading a quote from a church father, it is crystal clear that they all had the same thing. They would be reading essentially in their language what you're reading today in yours because yours is drawn from those ancient manuscripts.

Now let me give you something to compare with all that. The second most common ancient document in the manuscript world is Homer's Iliad. Remember that when you went to college? You had to read that epic poem called the Iliad by Homer? Next to the New Testament there are more copies of Homer's Iliad than any other ancient piece of literature. Oh, by the way, there are 643 of them...643, small change compared to twenty-five thousand. And, oh by the way, the oldest one is from the thirteenth century A.D. and Homer wrote in the eighth century B.C. We don't have anything even close to when Homer wrote. Who knows whether Homer ever said any of that?

Another familiar piece of literature to a student of history is the Gallic Wars, Caesar fought Gallic Wars. He wrote the Gallic Wars, the history of the Gallic Wars in the first century B.C. There are ten existing manuscripts of that, the oldest one is a thousand years after Caesar wrote.

Some of you may have heard of Herodotus, the Greek historian. He wrote history. In fact, Herodotus could be the father of historians, he was the son of the first historian. He wrote in the fifth century before Christ. We have eight manuscripts of Herodotus' history and the earliest is 1300 years after he wrote.

There's another one. Because I studied European history and have always been fascinated by this, I'm even reading something about it now, the history of the Peloponnesian war written by Thucydides, we have eight manuscripts of that, the earliest is 1300 years later. Do I need to go on? Nobody bothered to protect those. Nobody bothered to preserve those. But, boy, did they work hard to protect the Word of the living God. They knew what they had. With so many accurate manuscripts, you can know with no hesitation that the Bible you hold in your hand is a true English translation of the original autographs, as they're called, preserved accurately.

One of the scholars that I've studied in years past, is a man named A.T. Robertson. You'll see his name connected to matters regarding biblical scholarship. A.T. Robertson says, "The vast array of manuscripts has enabled textual scholars to accurately reconstruct the original text with...listen to this...more than 99.9 percent accuracy." That's pretty good. More than 99.9 percent accuracy.

What's so amazing about this, these are all hand copies...hand copies. Now you say, "You mean, in all of that there are no errors?" Oh, I didn't say that. They made errors. They put in a wrong word, put in a wrong spelling, left something out, occasionally they even tried to clarify something, some of these scribes. But guess what, we have so many manuscripts, we know when they're doing that. We know when we're doing that. Plus, if something shows up in a later manuscript, and it's not in any of the earlier ones, we know it was added later. It isn't brain surgery.

And there's a science of textual criticism, it's called lower criticism. The science of textual criticism...I'll give you an illustration of it. If you came across a manuscript in Greek that said, "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you have your manuscript...it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Hum. And let's say you found another fragment discovered somewhere and it said this, "It's easier for a cord to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven." You certainly can't put a camel through the eye of a needle, but you could put a cord through the eye of a needle. Which would be the correct one? What would your answer be? Not cord, because nobody would turn cord into camel, but somebody might turn camel into cord. Oh, by the way, there's only one two stroke difference between the word for cord and the word for camel. But we know when somebody does that. That's the science of textual criticism. Camel is right. We also know that because of the text, because the text says, "It's impossible with man," and it would be impossible to put a camel through the eye of a needle."

You say, "Why in the world are you telling us all this? Are you enjoying it? Is it helpful? Okay. Why am I telling you this? Because here we are at the end of Mark and we've got this long textual variance on the end of Mark that we know did not appear in the original autograph written by Mark. That's why it's in brackets.

And, by the way, look at the bottom of the page after verse 20 wherever you are, do you see another paragraph there in different type? That's another ending that showed up...a short one. So you have a long one, and a short one.

Why is this here? If it's not in the original, why is it here?

Well, I think there's a pretty obvious answer. Verse 8, remember verse 8 from this morning? This is Mark's closing statement. "They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid...period." That's it.

Can you understand that folks started to say, "You know, this doesn't seem like an ending, that seems like stopping, not ending." The language is dramatic. The resurrection is shocking. The women are convinced of the resurrection by the empty tomb and by the angelic announcement. It has dawned on them in their terrified bewilderment. They're gripped by the wondrous reality of the resurrection and a few steps later they're characterized by great joy. They're speechless. And, oh, by the way, so is Mark.

I like that. Verse 8 says, "They said nothing to anyone," and that was good enough for Mark, he didn't either. He just shut it down. How fitting that the end is so dramatic and so powerful that neither the women, nor Mark could speak.

And what do you need to add? You have an empty tomb. You have an angelic announcement. And you have the wonder of eyewitnesses. You know, Mark started this whole thing back in verse 1 of chapter 1, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What was Mark working for in writing this history? He wanted you to be convinced of what? That Jesus is the Son of God. Mark wanted the same thing that John wanted, "These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

Did he make his point at the end? Are you convinced? Was it enough? Did these 16 chapters get it done for you? Is it clear that He's the Son of God? Mark didn't even let any human voice utter that reality until near the very end. And of all strange people, it's a Gentile, Roman centurion who is in charge of the crucifixion who says, for the first time it's passed human lips, "Truly this man is the Son of God." What else is there to say? The proof is in the resurrection.

And so, Mark is as speechless as the women because his point is proven. But this bothered lots of folks early in church history.

Now they were used to a lot more post-resurrection history. There's a lot more in Matthew, a whole lot more in Luke, and a lot more in John. It just didn't kind of seem to match. So some have made some suggestions that Mark would have interacted with Luke, since both were in Rome together at the same time. And maybe Luke said, "Look, I've got it covered. I've done pretty extensive work on post-resurrection appearances and Luke's gospel would cover it all." And Luke's had already been penned. So maybe Mark didn't...didn't feel like he needed to add that.

Well, I don't know if that conversation happened. I don't know. I don't know if they agreed on that, neither do you, neither does anybody else, so what's the point? Speculation doesn't work a lot in interpreting Scripture.

Others have said this, "Oh, remember now, according to one church father, Papias, Peter was the source for Mark. Peter in Rome, Mark in Rome, Mark is in Rome writing this gospel in Rome to the Romans and he's getting his information from Peter. And some have suggested that Mark stopped because he didn't have access to Peter anymore because Peter got arrested and executed.

Well maybe. I mean, there's not a maybe about him getting arrested and executed, but maybe it was his arrest and execution that stopped the process. But it seems to me that if the Holy Spirit wanted to keep talking, He could.

Others might say, "Well look, you've got all this information in John and all this information in Matthew, and if you go into Luke, you've not only got everything Luke wrote, post-resurrection in his gospel, but then he wrote the whole book of Acts. Isn't that enough?" And you might say, "Look, John in his gospel omitted everything on the front end, starting his history of Jesus with the baptism of Jesus, 30 years into the story. So if John has a late start, what's wrong with Mark having a brief ending?

It's possible that they thought that way. I don't know. No one knows. I'm giving you these because this is what I read that suggested to me as the reason this thing ends the way it does. But it is all

sheer speculation. I don't know if these conversations ever happened at all.

Another popular idea is this, look, Mark was intending to leave an open-ended rhetorical device. Really. Do you know what Mark was intending? Really? I don't know what he was intending, I only know what he wrote. I don't know what he was intending. I don't know what he's thinking. Who knows what he's thinking? I can't know anybody's intention.

So I think it's just better to stick with the text. Well let's go back to the text and see if we can't come up with an answer from the text. Verse 8, "They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid." The word *tromos* is the word trembling, ecstasy, transcendent, bewilderment, the word *ekstasis* is the word here for astonishment. Phobia is the word for being afraid. Very strong language to express the terrifying bewilderment that has gripped their minds as they begin to understand that Jesus has come back to life. Yes it's abrupt. Yes it's a shocking ending. But it is incomplete? That was the complaint. Way back, the complaint was it's incomplete, it's inadequate, so in very early years, very early years, second century, people started wanting to add something to Mark. Some people said, "Well, there's an ending somewhere, but it's lost." I read an entire section advocating the lost ending theory. How in the world could you say something was lost if you didn't know it existed? And if you did know it existed, it wouldn't be lost.

Others said, "Well, we've got to put an ending on this. We can't...we just can't leave this." So endings began to appear, short ones, like the little one at the end, "They promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions, and after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." That's true. Right? They didn't say anything that wasn't correct in that little ending. They just added it.

By the way, we have all kinds of manuscript evidence to know that was added later. I told you the two most important manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus both end at verse 8, as do the other ancient manuscripts. Our translations are based on the most ancient Greek manuscripts. And they don't have that short ending, and they certainly don't have that long ending, verses 9 through 20.

In the fourth century, for example, two of the fathers, Eusebius and Jerome, wrote that almost all Greek manuscripts of the New Testament end at verse 8. Did they know those other endings existed? Yes they did. They knew they existed. In the second century, Justin Martyr and Tatian knew about other endings. Irenaeus, also, Irenaeus is in 150 to 200, he knows about this long ending because he quotes verse 19 from it. They knew these endings existed. They existed early. But even by the fourth century, Eusebius says, "The Greek manuscripts do not include these endings...the originals."

Now if you happen to have a King James Bible, or a New King James, you will find verses 9 to 20 in the regular flow of text without brackets because the King James and the New King James are based on a medieval text...a medieval text, based on later texts. However, since that time, we have discovered the earlier texts, so all the later translations, NAS, NAS Update, ESV, NIV, etc., etc., are all based on the more ancient texts. That's why if you have any of those, it's bracketed; because the earlier texts omitted it.

The external evidence indicates that this doesn't belong and it's pretty good evidence. There are

some other endings floating around too, by the way, some others that you don't need to know about. So we would say external evidence argues for exclusion, not inclusion. And that would pretty much cross the board with textual scholars.

There's also internal evidence. You're going to enjoy this...internal evidence. Let's look at this long ending...this long ending.

"Now after He had risen from...risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene from whom He had cast out seven demons." By the way, what is said here is true. That isn't the argument. The argument isn't whether it's true, the argument is whether it's included. I hope that what I say to you is true, but it's not Scripture. "She went out and reported to those who had been with Him while they were mourning and weeping, when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the others, but they didn't believe them either. Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed in My name, they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues. They will pick up serpents and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. So then when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God and they went out and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word by the signs that followed."

Now let me just say a few interesting things about this. The internal evidence here also argues for exclusion. The transition from verse 8 to 9 is awkward. Verse 9 begins, "Now," that necessitates continuity with the preceding narrative. However, what follows in verse 9 does not continue the story of the women. It's talking about the women and then it says, "Now, after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene." There's no transition there. It's abrupt, it's a bizarre change, lacks continuity. He should be continuing the story of the women based on the word "now," not jumping to the appearance to Mary Magdalene.

Also, in verse 9 there's a masculine pronoun, a masculine pronoun expects "he" as its antecedent, not the women. Why would there be a change in the pronouns? I'm just going to go by these quickly. Why would Mark also identify Mary Magdalene as the one from whom Jesus cast demons, seven demons. Why does he introduce her here when she's already been mentioned three times in the narrative. You don't introduce her at the end of the story.

The angel spoke of Jesus' promise to appear to His followers in Galilee. All the appearances that are recorded in this postscript are of appearances in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the vocabulary is not consistent with Mark. It doesn't even read like Mark. There are eighteen words here that are never used anywhere by Mark. The structure is very different from the familiar structure of Mark's writing. The title, "Lord Jesus," is used here in verse 19, never used anywhere else by Mark. There's no reference to Peter here, although Peter was mentioned in verse 7.

And then you have some strange themes, the theme of not believing in verses 11, 14 and 16. The theme of gospel proclamation, verses 11 through 20, they don't exist anywhere in Mark. They seem out of bounds for the subjects that occupy him.

And then you have thrown in signs. They don't appear in any of the four gospels. In no account, post-resurrection of Jesus, is there any discussion of signs like picking up serpents, speaking with tongues, casting out demons, drinking poison, laying hands on the sick. So both internally and externally, this is foreign to Mark.

You say, "Well where did this thing come from?" Well, we don't know who it came from, but I know where. It came from...some people got together and they started picking things out of the other gospels and out of some of the other New Testament books and putting them together. For example, verse 9 is taken right out of Luke 8:1 to 3. Verse 10 is taken from John 20, verse 18. Verse 12 is taken from Luke 24:13 to 32, the road to Emmaus account. Verse 13 is taken from Luke 24. Verse 14 is taken from Luke 24:36 to 38; verse 15 is taken from Matthew 28:19, you know that. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." That's right out of Matthew 28:19. Verse 16 is taken right out of John 20:23 and verses 17 and 18, with all the signs and things, are drawn from a lot of sources.

Back in Matthew chapter 10, Mark chapter 6, Luke chapter 10, you remember the Lord gave to His Apostles the power to cast out demons and to do miracles. We see the same on Pentecost. We see the same going through the book of Acts. We're told by Paul writing to the Corinthians that the signs of an Apostle were signs and wonders and mighty deeds. In the book of Acts, we know that Paul was saved from a snake bite at the end of the book of Acts, twenty-eighth chapter verses 3 to 6. We don't have any illustration of drinking poison, we don't know how that got thrown in. That doesn't appear anywhere else in Scripture.

So what have we got here? We've got a patchwork collage that some early folks felt needed to be thrown together, all of which is scriptural with the exception of the kind of bizarre stuff about signs, in an attempt to help Mark get a better ending. Frankly, I think it's a bad ending. We have all that information. It's all kind of disjointed here. And I like Mark's ending.

So let's talk about Mark's ending, and then we'll finish. Why does he end the way he ends? Well, I think it's just the way he wrote. He started very abruptly...yeah, he did. He skipped...well he skipped everything like John did, up to the baptism. He starts at the baptism. What about the Elizabeth/Zacharias promise of John the Baptist? Annunciation, the angels, the virgin birth, Bethlehem, where's that? Not here. In fact, he starts with the ministry of John the Baptist in verse 2. And then Jesus shows up to be baptized in verse 9. He has nothing before the ministry of Jesus and he has nothing after the resurrection of Jesus.

He's trying to prove a point that He's the Son of God and he proves it by following Him in His ministry to His resurrection. I like the kind of people who make a point, and they're done. I think he made his.

But there's something else here that strikes me. The last word that Mark wrote was the word "afraid, fear." That's kind of a key. They were afraid. Not in the sense that they were afraid for their lives or they were afraid of being harmed or that they were in danger. This is the word *phobeo* from which we

get phobia, which means an irrational experience. They're literally experiencing bewilderment, amazement, astonishment, wonder. There are no human explanations. This thing ends in wonder.

I want you to follow with me a little bit. Let's go back to chapter 1, you're going to enjoy this brief review of Mark. Chapter 1 verse 22, "They were amazed at His teaching." Verse 27, "They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves." He had just cast out a demon. Go to chapter 2 verse 12, "He healed the paralytic, and they were all amazed and were glorifying God saying, 'We've never seen anything like this.'"

Go to chapter 4 and verse 41, "He calmed the storm and they became very much afraid and they said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" Chapter 5 verse 15, "They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion and they became frightened." Chapter 5 verse 33, "He healed the woman with the issue of blood, and the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her came and fell down before Him." Verse 42, "Jesus raised the little girl from death and immediately, verse 42 says, they were completely astounded." Chapter 6 verse 51, He got in a boat and stopped the storm, walked on the water and they were utterly astonished.

Go to chapter 9. This is Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration, and in verse 6, "They became terrified." Go to verse 15, "Immediately when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him." Go to verse 32, "He had just spoken of His death and resurrection, they didn't understand the statement and they were afraid." Go to chapter 10, verse 24, "The disciples were amazed at His words." Go to verse 32, "They were on the road going to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them, and they were amazed and those who followed were fearful." Chapter 11, verse 18, "Jesus goes in and attacks the temple Tuesday of Passion Week, the chief priests, scribes heard it, began seeking how to destroy Him for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching."

Chapter 12, verse 17, when Jesus had escaped the confrontation with the Jewish leaders, chapter 12 and verse 17, "He wisely answers, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's,' and they were amazed at Him." Chapter 15 verse 5, Jesus stands before Pilate and doesn't say anything. "So Pilate was amazed." Chapter 16, verse 5, "Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe...you read it...and they were amazed."

Could I retitle this book, The Amazing Jesus? What else do you expect Mark to say to finish then that the women fled trembling, and astonishment gripped them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid?" This is absolutely consistent with how Mark ends everything. This is his pattern and this is the most amazing thing of all. He's used this all the way along to punctuate absolutely everything. And he moves from one point of amazement to the next. So it ends where it ought to end. It's not incomplete. It ends where he loves to end. It ends with amazement and wonder at the resurrection.

Are you amazed? I've been amazed since we started this thing. I've been amazed for 43 years. The story of Jesus is amazing. Isn't every lesson amazing? Isn't every word in the gospel of Mark amazing? Isn't every miracle amazing? Isn't every confrontation amazing? Isn't every insight amazing? Isn't everything about him stunning and overwhelming and why not end it all with the glory

and wonder of the resurrection that proves He is the Son of God and we all walk away in amazement?

I'm amazed. I hope you are.

Lord, we thank You for this wonderful evening we've been able to share together. Thank You for the journey of all these decades and it is just one journey and we'll have more, and we look forward to them. But my, what a journey it's been. And we've been amazed through the whole thing and we're amazed now and that's as we should be. Thank You for the amazing Jesus and precious John Mark...John Mark who had to be rescued from being an unfaithful guy and restored and recovered from his unfaithfulness he could be used to write the history of the amazing Jesus, and by that history, not only to prove that He is the Son of God, but that everything about Him is absolutely amazing...amazing.

It was amazement really, not fear that marked the women, just as it had marked them all as they met Him. I think of the hymn, "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner, condemned unclean. How marvelous, how wonderful our song shall ever be, how marvelous, how wonderful is My Savior's love for me."

You amaze us all the time, Lord, and Your amazement comes through Your Word it comes through Your providential care, it comes through others in whom You live, who bring Your amazing reality to us. It comes in the myriad ways in which You bless us. May we never lose our wonder. May we always be like the women, walking away in amazement that who it is that loves us gave Himself for us, rose again and ever lives to gather us into His eternal presence. We thank You and we bless Your holy name. Amen.

There we are. Than you...thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I need to thank you because you make this, as always, a joy...a joy.

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