

**The End is the Beginning**  
**Mark 16:1-8**

Well friends, I suppose some congratulations are in order this morning because with the reading of this passage of scripture we have gone through the entire gospel of Mark from start to finish.

Back in January we started going through Mark's gospel, chapter by chapter so that over the next 3 ½ months we would really get to know the man who that the little baby in the manger at Christmas time became.

We've gone from Christmas to the Cross, and I hope that in spending this time watching, observing, and learning about Jesus we can say that we really do know his story better than we did before.

But perhaps you noticed as we read the last eight verses of the gospel of Mark this morning that it's a rather abrupt ending.

The women go to the tomb to give Jesus some last rites that they felt were important, they are distraught with grief and they

haven't thought about how they are going to get into the tomb but they keep going anyways and when they get there the tomb is open.

They go inside to find a young man – an angel who tells them Jesus has risen from the dead. He instructs them to pass a message on to Jesus' disciples and so they leave afraid and trembling and they don't say anything.

The end.

You know someone once told me that if you were composing something, be it a story, a speech, or a piece of music that the most important parts were the beginning and the ending.

A good ending takes all the loose ends and ties them up; it brings resolution and conclusion and doesn't leave things hanging.

But the end of the gospel of Mark – the end of Jesus' story doesn't do any of that. The plot doesn't wrap up neatly, there's no resolution to the tension, and there are loose ends...

Quite frankly it wouldn't get a great review by any of the literary critics

But Mark didn't write Jesus' story so that He could get accolades from literary critics.

Mark didn't wasn't trying to compose an epic story that takes us from start to finish with all the right elements in it.

Mark's finishes his gospel with this abrupt resurrection ending to show that just as a tomb cannot contain Jesus Christ – the Son of God – neither can a story.

You see friends its rather easy for bible stories to remain bible stories – easy to pick up, easy to censor and skip the parts which are uncomfortable, easy to put back down again and leave until we decide we want to engage them again.

Stories can become tombs in which we bury the Word of God, trapping it, keeping it from getting into our lives and maybe changing whatever narrative that we are writing for ourselves.

You know – you know the one with the happy ending where all our dreams come true... we get the girl, we get the guy, we get our dream job, have the perfect family, we win the lottery, retire early, travel, shop – whatever happy ending you might be thinking of writing for yourself.

But the resurrection means that Jesus breaks out of the ending of Mark's gospel, He's not the main character who needs plot resolution and loose ends tied up – He is the living Word of God and He can't be held by a story any more than a tomb.

So when the women go to the tomb, expecting to find the main character embalmed because this is just another tragic story about a would-be messiah who was executed by Rome – the story doesn't end as they think it would.

The Angel is left behind to tell them Jesus has left the story – this is not the predictable ending that you saw coming.

The main character is alive and loose in our reality, He does not live on the pages of the bible, or in the memories and hearts of those who remember his story – He lives in our world as the

resurrected Son of God, Lord of the Universe and He is as alive and real as you and I and even more so.

The main character has now jumped out of the story to become the author and He is inviting us to throw in a plot twist to our own stories and allow him to take over authorship of our narratives.

You see friends, the ending of the gospel of Mark is really your own life and it's written by how you respond to the one who can't be contained by a tomb or a story.

Let me give you an example;

There was a Muslim who became a Christian and some of his friends asked him, "Why have you done such a thing?" He answered, "Well, it's like this: Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions. You didn't know which way to go; and there at the fork were two men—one dead, and one alive—which one would you ask to show you the way?"

Don't you want the one who has survived and defeated death to be the one writing the remainder of your life's story? I know that I do...

When Christ is the author of your life, there is a new vocabulary that enhances your narrative, new characters that enrich your storyline, and in spite of the tragedies and the unexpected plot-twists which occur...

Be assured Jesus Christ is writing your life into His story and one day that will result in a new heavens and a new earth, where there is no more pain, suffering or death – only the joy and peace of living with our Lord and Savior in a world made new.

So friends, as you go back into your regular everyday routine once Easter celebrations are over – be on the look out for interruptions in your life, for days that just seem to get taken over by something else, for unexpected consequences and unforeseen occurrences that intrude you're your well organized schedule...

There's wonderful Christian lady named Beth Moore who shares her story about an interruption she received from God while waiting to catch a plane in the Knoxville airport back after Easter in April of 2005.

While noticing a bedraggled man in a wheelchair whose long hair was as scraggly and messed up as it could be, she felt a prompting in her heart to go over to this fellow, thinking that the Spirit was perhaps prompting her to witness to him she asked God if this couldn't wait until they were on the plane together.

But she heard God say, I don't want you to witness to him I want you to brush his hair!

Needless to say a futile argument took place between Beth and God about this and in the end Beth reluctantly went over to the gentleman and asked if she could brush his hair. Turns out He was a bit hard of hearing so she ended up having to ask rather loudly for all to hear – Sir, may I have the pleasure of brushing your hair! He consented.

Once she had finished brushing his hair she asked him if He knew Jesus – this is what He said back to her. 'I've known Him since I married my bride. She wouldn't marry me until I got to know the Savior.' He said, 'You see, the problem is, I haven't seen my bride in months. I've had open-heart surgery, and she's been too ill to come see me. I was sitting here thinking to myself, what a mess I must be for my bride.'

Later Beth shares how an airline stewardess, who was very moved by the whole ordeal, came over and asked her why she did that for the old man. Beth said to her – Do you know Jesus, he can be the bossiest at times...

Friends, the tomb couldn't hold our Lord, neither can a story – He is alive and well and He is interrupting our lives.

And recognize, in those times... Jesus is overwriting your story with his own, after all He is alive and well you know, and we're so busy it's really difficult to get our attention or our time – Heaven doesn't use a Blackberry or do Facebook!

So don't get all frustrated and upset because your busy schedule has been thrown out of wack – stop and say a prayer to Jesus and ask Him to show what He is up to, don't just look with your eyes and hear with your ears – try to perceive with your heart what Christ is doing...

Yes it's scary at first – maybe the first time, like the women running from the tomb you'll do and say nothing in response to what you perceive.

But it will happen again, and again, and again – remember Jesus is persistent even death couldn't stop Him. Eventually you'll have to say something, do something – we know the women eventually did or we wouldn't be here celebrating the Resurrection.

Beth Moore ends her story saying “I got on my own flight, sobs choking my throat, wondering *how many opportunities just like that one had I missed along the way...* all because I didn't want people to think I was strange. God didn't send me to that old man. He sent that old man to me”

So how do we end a message like this friends? Abruptly I think... because this message is waiting for you to write your own ending for it when you leave here today.

Amen.