**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*The Good News According to Mark,*

*An Apostle of Jesus Christ*

 *365 Day Disciple ~ Mark 16:1-4*

*God Rolls the Stone Away ~ Yours Too*

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

October 7th In the Year of Our Lord 2018

(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 - Christian Standard Bible 2017 quoted)

**Life’s Stones**

Do you have a situation in your life where you wish God would roll a stone away? The women approached the tomb of Jesus not knowing how they were going to remove the stone. To achieve their goal, the stone had to be rolled away.

 To their surprise when they arrived, the stone had already been rolled away. We must not lose sight of the fact that they were going to honor and anoint the Lord’s body. In our life’s pursuits, we should seek for stones to be removed to honor the Lord.

 We all know that our life’s journey has many big stones to be moved. These are too heavy to move on our own. First, we need, and should seek, the assistance of God. Prayer and corporate prayer should be our first course of action. I know that many of you have a persistent prayer life.

 In this process, we seek the Lord in knowing that what lies in front of us is part of the works God has planned for our lives. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do” (Eph. 2:10).

 The women were a group that God had ordained to come to Jesus’s tomb and be witnesses to the Resurrection. We need to strongly consider that God has placed other Believers around us to assist in moving large stones and/or to witness that God is the One who rolls away stones.

**Current Application**

 As many of you know (metaphorically speaking), we have recently had a large stone to move in our local government. This was made possible through prayer and Believers coming together in Truth and leading others to see the light. No one person could have accomplished the goal, and that goal had to be a pursuit of God’s righteousness. Thus, the stone was removed. I was told, from a legal perspective, that unless there was a 110% chance of success, we should not move forward. I did not disagree with that assessment from a temporal legal standpoint. However, I believed, with 110% spiritual strength in pursuing God’s righteousness, I would be at peace with the outcome.

In life, you have to stick with pursuing God’s righteousness and authority. Notice that I am saying, God’s righteousness and authority, not mine or ours. We have no righteousness or authority on our own.

When I joined the Houston Police Department (July 1979), the Chief of the Department (Harry Caldwell) came into our class and told us some words of wisdom.

 Hopefully, you all will graduate and be on the street running calls for service. You will be proud and energized, and you will have the feeling of great authority. You would have taken an oath of office and been sworn-in as Police officers of the City of Houston and the State of Texas. Now, regarding your authority, never forget where that comes from. One day you will get a disturbance call to a bar where rough people hang-out and drink and get rowdy. You will walk-in with that uniform, badge and gun and order everyone to get against the wall with their hands in the air, and they most likely will obey your command. Now, I want you to go back to that same bar when you get off duty, out of uniform and order everyone to get against the wall with their hands above their heads. I am here to tell you that you are going to get tossed out on your ... (rear).

 When we act as Believers, we must never forget that it is God who is at work in us for His good. When the Eternal God works through us, there can be a trembling and an awe reverence. There will be an outcome the public thought could not happen.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear (reverence) and trembling (respects);

 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13 NAU)

 **As we go through today’s sermon,** think about some heavy stones that need to be moved in your life. Remember that *we* placed some stones there and God or others had nothing to do with them. Therefore, instead of looking for a miracle from God to intervene, God has already equipped you to move the stone. Sometimes, a good look in the mirror can achieve dramatic changes in a person’s life.

 **The four Gospels** all chronicle the account of the women going to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week, being Sunday. Remember, the women had followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb.

Matthew 27

55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed along and observed the tomb and how his body was placed.

 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

 They had observed the Sabbath day ritual of not working. (Sabbath – Friday about 6 PM to Saturday about 6 PM) But now they came to labor over the Lord’s body in the tomb. The women came to carry-out the burial customs of the Jews which is to clean and anoint the body as a sign of respect and honor. Even though the women had followed the men who carried Jesus to the tomb, they did not stay long enough or could not see that the men anointed Jesus once they laid Him in the tomb (John 19:39-40). This indicates that there was not a relationship or communication between the two groups as Joseph and Nicodemus were part of the ruling class.

 So much had happened in such a short time. The arrest, trial and crucifixion had taxed all their human emotion beyond their limits to contain the impact of Jesus’ death. During this catastrophic event, it is noted that not one apostle (or anyone else) anticipated the tomb to be empty. They came to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ Body, not to witness the Resurrection. Luke makes note of the fact that Jesus had told His followers that He would rise from the dead (Luke 24:6-8). Once they were told, they remembered. (also see Matthew 28:6).

 Jesus talked about His Resurrection several times and in many forms. “If you destroy this temple, I will rebuild it in three days” is an example (John 3:19). It cannot be emphasized enough that the Resurrection is the central event in the incarnation regardless of its timing.

 If someone is going to dismiss God, they will dismiss the Resurrection. Anyone can be crucified, and a lot of people were throughout history. It is commonly observed that only One was crucified for the sins of every person who ever lived and then rose from the grave.

 If someone is witnessing Jesus; asked them if they believe He walked out of that tomb at Calvary. It is easy to say you agree about Jesus’s teachings, but what about the empty tomb? What about the resurrected Jesus, the Messiah, walking out of the tomb at Calvary? It is just not that the tomb was empty, but that Jesus arose and walked out on his own two feet. He was alive which was beyond human comprehension or understanding. Humanity has no scientific explanation, I believe. I know that God wants it that way. He calls us to a faith relationship with Him. It is easy to believe in the substance of things seen.

**Hebrews 11:1-2 1** Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. NAU

 But faith in God’s Resurrection is a transformed heart, a faith based upon a surrender to God’s throne, a faith that has encountered the living God in a person’s heart.

**Faith saves; faith reinvigorates the soul.**

**For by faith we are forgiven and placed once again on the road for Christ.**

During the Resurrection at the Sea of Tiberias - (Galilee)

**John 21:15-17**

Peter do you love me more than these? Feed my lambs.

Peter do you Love me? Shepherd my sheep.

 Peter do you love me? Feed my sheep.

 **Continue in Mark – the women**

**Mark 16:1** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him.

 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise.

 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?"

 4 Looking up, they noticed that the stone-- which was very large-- had been rolled away.

**Luke, Matthew and John parallel passages**

**Luke 24:1-12** 1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.

 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

 3 They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes.

 5 So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground. "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" asked the men.

 6 "He is not here, but he has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee,

 7 saying, 'It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day'?"

 8 And they remembered his words.

 9 Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest.

 10 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things.

 11 But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths. So he went away, amazed at what had happened.

**Matthew 28:1-7** After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb.

 **2 There was a violent earthquake**, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it.

 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow.

 4 The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.

 5 The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

 6 He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you."

**John 20:1-18 1** On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

 2 So she went running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, "They've taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him!"

 3 At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb.

 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first.

 5 Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

 6 Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there.

 7 The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself.

 8 The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed.

 9 For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead.

 10 Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

 11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb.

 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him."

 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus.

 15 "Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?" Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will take him away."

 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"-- which means "Teacher."

 17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what he had said to her.

 We have observed that the women were in keeping with Jewish burial customs when they came to Jesus’ tomb. The Jews entombed their dead and waited about a year, then re-entered the tomb and collected the bones and placed them in a small box for time and eternity.

 There is constant construction work on-going in Israel today. During a construction project in 1990, important items were unearthed. These items were taken to an Archeologist who determined that Caiaphas’s “ossuary” box was found. This has brought great observation that the biblical account of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion took place. Not that people of faith need archeologist findings to prove their faith.

 The **Caiaphas ossuary** is one of twelve ossuaries, or bone boxes, discovered in a burial cave in south Jerusalem in November 1990, two of which featured the name "[Caiaphas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caiaphas)". The especially beautiful ossuary is twice inscribed, "Joseph, son of Caiaphas" and held the bones of a 60-year-old male. The limestone ossuary measures c. 37 cm high by 75 cm long and is housed in the [Israel Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Museum), Jerusalem.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caiaphas_ossuary>

 **The Women’s Witness**.

It is of note that women were the first to find Jesus’ tomb empty. In the patriarchal world of the first century, a woman’s word or witness was not valid. So, if someone writing to prove the account of Jesus’ resurrection was true, they would not chronicle a woman’s witness for this would lend to discrediting the account. However, God works beyond fallen man’s customs to reach the whole world with His Message.

The women anticipated that the large stone would have to be rolled away. However, a miracle had taken place, and, upon their arrival, they found that the stone had been rolled away.

Matthew’s Gospel tells us that an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and had rolled the stone away and was sitting on it when the women arrived.

**Looking for Help**

 This account is a great example of people seeking the Lord. Thus, God took care of the things that challenged them. They were concerned about the stone being too heavy for them to roll away. It is my observation that these women were seeking the Lord, so something good happened. Obviously, life for Christians has not always been good. However, no matter what happens in a Believer’s life, the stone sealing Jesus’ tomb remains rolled away. It helps to be looking for God, then good things are more likely to happen. Even in times of persecution, the Believer’s witness and testimony are a victory in Jesus. Conversely, those that are not seeking God, it is of no surprise when bad things happen. They do not have witness and testimony of and for the Lord.

When burglars break into a church and steal the church organ and run out of gas getting away, they should not be surprised. True story. I caught them.

So, I would rather have Jesus and carry His Cross with Him.

The Cross-road is the road to victory in this life.

The Cross-road leads to eternal life with God.

 The Cross-road illuminates our hearts in the darkest of times.

 **This account of the empty tomb** is a spiritual experience that is unapparelled in human history. Visualize yourself in this situation. You go to the tomb of your friend, your spiritual leader, who had been executed by the state at the demands of a mob, to find a heavy stone rolled away and a celestial being, an angel, sitting on top of the stone, and the angels says, “Howdy, How Y’all doing?” My first thought is that the angel must be from Texas. LOL. Ok, more serious. Just want to see who is awake.

 So, in the spiritual reality, You, as a Believer, go to a funeral, to a tomb, to a grave site and expect a spiritual encounter with God. You may see angels or the product of their presence.

 Jesus had already given His followers insight into passing through the door of death when **Lazarus died**. People were upset that Jesus was not there and believed that Jesus could have prevented **Lazarus** from dying. Even the Jews mocked Jesus.

**John 11:36-37**

6 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

 37 But some of them said, "Couldn't he who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?"

 Many people today are mad at God, because their loved one died. Preventing death is not the goal of the Cross. Jesus was all about death on the Cross. From the Incarnation, the birth Of Jesus, His death was expected.

So, how did the Jews respond to Jesus resurrecting Lazarus?

**John 12:9-11**

9 Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one he had raised from the dead.

 10 But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also,

 11 because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

 **Jesus did not come to be crucified on The Cross to keep us from dying. Jesus defeated the effects of the Cross in order for us to see that He will resurrect us from the grave.**

 AMEN