

Mark 16

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[0 : 00] Can we now turn to look at the Gospel of Mark, that chapter that we're writing, the Gospel of Mark. And with God's help, can we think, as it were, three markers, not a threefold text, but as it were, three markers within that chapter to guide their thoughts.

One, at verse three, who shall roll away the stone? And then we'll move on to verse six, he is risen, he is not here.

Behold the place where they leave him. And then the next verse, the promise of the fulfillment of the promise, rather, he goes before you to Galilee, and there shall we see him as he said unto you.

Who shall roll away the stone? He is risen, he is not here, and he goes before you. And there shall you see God. Here we have the account that we all know so well.

The account of three ladies, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, with blessing in their souls, and also with the best of intentions and goodwill in their hearts.

[1 : 26] And yet, with a substantial, in fact, a great burden on their minds. Who shall roll away the stone?

Who shall roll away the stone? And this same account is also one which mirrors the dilemma in so many ways that confronts God's people.

The dilemma confronts God's faithful people. And that dilemma is as, I don't know what the plural for dilemma is, but there are many of them.

As there are people, as there are hearts and souls, as there are groups of people. It's not only dilemmas for individuals, but also for groups of boys, people for congregations, and for, in fact, for the church as a whole, so, so often.

For example, perhaps a congregation with no minister. How can we survive without a guide?

[2 : 43] How can we survive as a congregation? How can we survive as a group? How can we survive perhaps as a denomination? And then when we're really, I'm not sure whether it's pessimistic or faithless, or faithless, but the thought comes to us.

How can God's people, how can God's church survive in such a dark age as that in which we live in?

And these dilemmas, and also individually, perhaps we can see God's will for us. We hear God's call in our heart.

How are we going to respond? How are we going to do what we feel that God is calling us to do? I've never done this before. These kind of thoughts.

In so many ways, and in so many different words, who shall draw us away the stone? We prayed this morning for two congregations of our own denomination.

[3 : 54] Congregation of Cavalish, the congregation in Petrus, Elbert Island. And we've been praying every week for two, as the year has been going on. And this is an example of how we can, when this dilemma comes to our mind and to our heart, who shall draw us away the stone?

To bring it to God in prayer. We can, another example, we can even, in our own human mind, as the years pass every more quickly, and we were talking about that, in the push before we came in, how the years are rolling on ever and ever more quickly, like a boulder rolling down a glen, a clock of a glen, and we're rolling with it.

And we can see the inevitable in God's providence coming ever closer to us, and the dilemma, and the line, how are we going to withstand it?

How are we going to prepare for it? Forgetting that God is preparing us day by day and year by year. Even in Baragah 19, that it is coming ever more quickly.

Who shall draw us away the stone? Because in God's path of life for us, it's so easy for us to see the mountain. We always see the mountain, but we can so easily forget Him who has promised to

remove that mountain from our path.

[5 : 37] Remember we write in the prophecy of Isaiah. We always ask, who shall draw us away the stone?

But, as we read, every valley shall be exalted, and every hill shall be made low. Because in the outworking of God's providence for us, be it in His calling of us, or be it in these aspects of life which humanity pushes as far from us as we can, but we can't avoid.

In all these things, we come face to face with Him who has ordained it, and who has it all in the palm of His hand. Because in all of these things, He Himself is with us.

And the valleys of our lives in which we meet Him, they become, when we meet with Him in these valleys, they become, with His grace, not valleys, not holes in our lives, but uplifting milestones to which we can point ourselves, remind ourselves, and point others as proof that at this low point, whatever that low point was, we met with God.

Because there, in the despairing depths of that valley, He was there, He was there waiting for us, and He was there waiting for us to pick us up, and to carry us up, and forward.

[7 : 23] And the mountains which, obstruct us as it were, on the way, the insurmountable mountains which confront us on His path of life.

Every one of them seems to be, as these mountains come, they seem to be, to be, this last one, that we can't get over, this one, really, is a difficult one.

It seems to be the final wall, that we just can't climb. And we didn't, we don't willingly go towards them, in fact, we may back away from them.

But the fact is, that they relentlessly seem to, seem to, to, still to go towards us, as if they would go towards us.

But, then, have we noticed, how, instead, of, as we come closer, and closer, or as they come closer, and closer to us, have we noticed, that, rather than, seeming, higher, and higher, they, seem to change, as if, we were being, lifted over them.

[8 : 46] As if, we were being, lifted over them. pushed me back, until, almost suddenly, we find ourselves, on the other side. And, perhaps, surprised, as we've survived, but also, if we, have the mind, and the heart, to think of it, with a renewed, realisation, that, through to, his eternal promise, God was, on that mountain, God was, on that wall, and, that we have been, literally, uplifted, over it, by, his grace.

Every mountain, and, every valley, shall be exalted, and every mountain, and hill, shall be made, low. And, then, we ask, the shouts, who now, will, roll away, the stone, who, roll away, the stone. And, the thing is, that, that brings us, to the point, of these three ladies, again. These, three blessed ladies, with their, normal, everyday, humanity, remember, what they went through, over the last, three days, seeing the crucifixion, and all that followed, and all that, not before, they could only, see the stone.

Their, their, everyday, humanity, as it were, intensified, by what they've, gone through, since, last, Thursday or Friday. They could only, see the stone.

They could only, see the obstacle, which lay between them, and, their purpose. Which lay between them, and the body, of their Lord. But, in spite of that, we don't read, that they stopped.

[10 : 48] They didn't stop. They, they continue. I wonder if, they were available to us, and we were to ask them, how did you, find the, courage, or the encouragement, or the strength, to carry on?

What made you carry on? Knowing, that, that, that huge, and impossible, obstruction, was there before. And I'm sure, they might have said, that, well, we're not sure.

But looking back, at it now, we somehow, felt carried, carried forward, despite, despite, their, their, their, their, wonderings, and, despite, even, their doubts.

And, wonderings, and, doubts, are all part of, humanity, and all part of, the conflict, between, between, humanity, and, spiritual, between, between, of flesh and blood, and, of spiritual, selves.

And then, these, three ladies, having carried on, they reached, the grave. They reached, that place, which, in almost one breath, seemed almost, beyond that reach.

[12 : 13] Beyond their ability. And, beyond their, feeble, as we sometimes say, feeble, female power. That, place, that represented, such, awesome, and threatening, finality, as to make them, powerless.

What else, except a grave, will make us feel, powerless? There's a finality, and there's an aura, of, a, there's an aura of, that makes us feel, powerless.

who, who shall, go, and, away, the stone? And then, having persevered, and having carried on, and having reached it, they found the stone.

The stone was there. But, there was something, different about the stone, because, it was no longer, an obstacle. Once, they reached the stone, it was no longer, an obstacle.

That stone, that barrier, which separated them, from their Lord, had been, rolled away. And it was now, a, a, a, a, an impotent, and a useless, and a harmless, lump of stone.

[13:36] That's all it was. And so it is, with all the obstacles, and all the mountains, that we so often see, in our path. All those things, which we can see, yes, big enough, and potent enough, to stop us, in our spiritual attacks.

Yes, we can still see them, and we can still, understand them, and we can understand, why they seem so threatening. But the difference is, that we don't see them, in a new light.

We see them in a new light. They are, impotent, and they, are harmless, and they are behind this.

They are in the past. And, far from being, obsolete, and barriers now, they are, reminders, to us.

And they are, witnesses to us, of the power, which overcame them. And which, carried us with it, to a place, beyond their reach. And when they looked, verse four, when they looked, they saw that the stone, was rolled away, for it was very great.

[14:54] And then, they carried on, and they entered, into the sepulchre, and they saw, a young man, sitting on the right side, clothed, in a long white garment. And at verse six, we read, what he said to them.

Don't be afraid. You seek Jesus, of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen. He is not here.

Behold, the place, where they laid him.

He is risen. He is not here. Look, that's where he was. And he is no longer there. The supreme act, had been accomplished, and these, three ladies, who had come to carry out, the final service, humanly possible, for their Lord, with prayerful hearts.

They not only, very quickly, forgot the obstacle, that had filled, their minds out. But, they also found, that God, in his glory, had been, ahead of them.

And answered that prayer, far beyond, what they, could ever, as we still use the words, in our own prayers, far beyond, what they could ever, think, or ask.

[16:16] These, ladies, went to the, to the grave, only, with the prayer, that, somehow, they might find the strength, to roll away the stone.

And yet, see, how that prayer was answered, away, far and beyond, what they could ever think.

Who could think, that, that, that, he who was dead, could ever be alive, or risen, and taken away, from the grave.

Nobody would ever dare, dare to even, think that far. And yet, that was the answer, that God gave him. He had answered, that prayer, far beyond, what they could ever, think or ask.

And he had raised, the crucified dog, from the dead, and from the grave. He is risen, he is not here.

Behold, the place, where they made him.

the stone, had been rolled away. And, for many years, I used to, ask myself, the question, why, why, did the stone, have to be rolled away?

[17:33] Because, after the resurrection, we know, that the risen Christ, appeared through, closed doors, and in others, humanly, surprising circumstances.

So, that question, in my mind, for years was, did, the stone, have to be rolled away, to release him, from the grave? And, the simple answer, to that, is no.

The stone, didn't have to be, rolled away, to release him, from the grave. For him, to escape the tomb. That stone, was rolled away, so that, all the world, could be able, to look in.

Not only, the ladies, but that, the whole world, could look in, and see, the vacant, emptiness, of that grave.

He is no longer here. This, is the place, where he was, and for the lady. The open, and the empty tomb, was, and is, a most eloquent witness, declaring, to all the world, and to the end of time.

[18:45] These, very words, of the angel. He is risen, he is not here. Behold, the place, where they laid him. We haven't been, to the Holy Land, some of you might have been, but, we hear, that this is, one of the, of the places, where, where, the, the, the pilgrims, are taken, to see, and to witness, for themselves, and to look, into the, the open grave, because there is, no longer any stone.

This is where he was. He is risen, he is not here. Behold, the place, where they laid him. He had been victorious, over death, and over the grave.

And, to the end of time, that, empty grave, is a witness, to all the world, of its own defeat. A witness, of its own defeat.

And, all of God's people, can confront, death, that final law, which we talked about, earlier on, can confront, the grave, with, the confidence, defiance, given to us, by the Apostle Paul.

O death, where now, is thy sin? O grave, where now, is your victory? He is risen, he is not here. Behold, the place, where they laid him.

[20 : 10] But the angel, didn't, didn't stop there. The angel, continued to speak. And, he told the ladies, go your way, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goes before you, into Galilee.

There shall you see him, as he said unto you. Now, let's go into the middle of that, just for a second. He said, go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter.

And Peter, remember, Peter was the one, who was most like us. He was the, precipitate one. The one who, who, who, opened his mouth, before he decided, what he was going to say.

He was the precipitate one. He was the, careless one, the one, the one who was most like us. And, he was the one, who had, denied him.

Not once, not twice, but three times. And he was the one, with the gifted conscience. He was, he was the one, with the mountain, of gift, on his mind, and in his heart.

[21 : 33] Go your way, tell his disciples, and the gift ridden, Peter, that he goes before you, into Galilee. And there, you will all see him, as he said, unto you.

And here, we, we, we have a continuum, of resurrection, and already, the fulfillment, of, of, the observation. And I use that word, observation, he was to make, so pointedly, to his disciples later. When he said, lo, I am with you always. And that's, why I say, observation.

Because when we read that, carefully, we always see that, often see that, as a promise. Lo, I am with you always. And we use that word, as a promise.

And I remember, an old man, from Nesson, one, in fact, one of my own colleagues, Nesson, you know, I remember him, telling, I remember him, warning you, to be careful, of using the word promise.

[22 : 46] Because some of the things, he said, in the reading scripture, are not really a promise. And this is one of them. Because, he said, lo, I am.

It's not a promise. And I've said that here, I'm sure, several times before now. He said, look, I am, with you always.

Not a promise, a statement of fact. And that's where he used the word, observation, rather than promise. The observation, he was to make to them, so pointedly, later on.

Lo, I am, with you always. And if you, if you look carefully, with open mind, with open eyes, with a believing heart, you will see, what is in front of your face.

But I am with you. Who else, would lift you, and, over that mountain? Who else, would raise that valley? I am, with you always.

[23 : 51] Not a promise, a statement of fact. He goes before you, into Galilee. He goes before you, into, where you come from.

He goes before you, into that place, where you live. He goes before you, into that place, that you know best. And he goes before you, into the, everyday, places, places, that you know best.

And, even for you, I'm not thinking of him, because, that, that is really your space, your work perhaps, or for you, happen to be, everyday, in your daily life, and, in your daily work.

I am, with you always. He goes before you, into Galilee. He goes before you, into, if I you live. He goes before you, into the places, and into the situations, that you know best.

And, in going before you. He goes before you, even into the places, into which, you would not wish to go. The places, that you, wish to try to, avoid.

[25 : 06] He goes before you, into the places, that you, you would try to avoid. But, you shall not be, avoided. And, he goes before you, into the towering, and threatening mountain, over which, you must travel.

And, he is there, waiting to carry you, through, when your own strength, would fail you. He goes before you, into the depths, of the every dark, and really, valley, and whole.

And, through that, final valley, which, through which, we must, all pass. And, he fills, the darkness, of that valley, with his light.

He, though I walk, in death, dark, valley, the words of the psalmist, yet, I will fear none, for thou art with me, and thou art, and thou art, and staff me, comfort still.

Amen? When the dust, of this turmoil, in which you are, that word, it tells us, when that dust, settles, and you are able, to think, and see, and believe, more clearly.

[26 : 27] Then, and then, you will see him. And having seen him, you will know, that he has been with you, not only that, but you will know, that he was there before you.

He goes, before you, before you, into Galilee, as he said, unto you. He is risen.

He is not here. He goes before you. And he has conquered, death itself. He has conquered it for us.

He has conquered it, on our behalf. And just as, death, has, had no dominion, over him, his resurrection, is, his seal, of authority, by which, his own, and believe, and truly believe, his words.

Because, I live, you, will, live, also. Who shall, go as, away the stone? He is risen.

He is not here. Behold, the place, father, father, father, father, father, father, father. And, the third aspect, he goes before you, into Galilee. And there you will see, if you have the, eye of faith, to, to, to, to, to look, and to see, and to believe, what you are seeing.

[27 : 53] He goes before you, into Galilee, and there shall you see him, as he said, unto you.

Amen. May God, I was blessing to these, few thoughts, that precious section, of his work.