



Sermon Title: Final Words

Mark 16:14-20, Matthew 28:16-20

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We're going to jump right into scripture and hit it hard. Here we go. It's even in English. Imagine that. Here we go. It says, "Afterward He appeared." That's Jesus, "To the 11 themselves as they were reclining at table." Now this is the ESV version. I don't know why there's not an A there, reclining at a table. Grammar, I don't know, I guess it's all Greek. "And He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world to proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe. In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents and with their hands.

"And if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover.' So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken 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 message by accompanying signs." End of Mark. Now for those of you who may not know Harriet Tubman, she was born a slave and then she gained her freedom by escaping and when she was free, she didn't decide to just hang out and just enjoy her freedom. No, she decided to be part of the Underground Railroad and it's counted that she helped free about 70 slaves in her time. And because she wanted to be a part of abolishing slavery, she's one of the most famous and most important people in U.S. history.

And in her old age of 91, when she died in 1913, this is the account or one of the accounts of her final words. She says, "Give my love to the churches. Tell the women to stand firm. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, you also may be." Harriet Tubman here at her final words encourages the women in the church. You have a part to

play empowered by the Holy Spirit, you can make a difference. And then she quotes scripture of Jesus saying, "Look, I go and prepare a place for you and therefore when you come, I will be there." Harriet Tubman is encouraging her people that she will meet them. Now, not everyone's final words are this quotable or this good, who knows what mine will be, but I'm pretty sure it's not going to be that. But at least for the loved ones who are with someone, those final words most likely will be remembered because that's the last time we get to hear their voice.

And so what we read here in Mark 16 are the final words of Jesus to His disciples, which is very similar to the count in Matthew of Jesus' final words to disciples. Now here at BelPres for the whole summer, we've been going through the book of Mark, Mark: Jesus in action. And so to a degree, this is the last sermon in the series. Next week will be another one. So to a degree I get the final words to the sermon series. Now hopefully I won't die. That's not preferable. I'm supposed to preach on October 20th, but we'll see if I make it, see what happens. I survived Sanctuary. So we're doing all right so far and I thought, hey, why not go out with a bang? Since it talked about the handling of snakes and drinking poison, I strategically placed some deadly snakes under some of the tables and I switched out some of the communion cups with some poison. So we'll find out. I'm just kidding, I didn't switch out any of the communion cups with poison.

The snakes on the other hand, I guess we'll find out. For those of you who don't understand sarcasm, that's all a joke. Well, if you remember, if you were here, maybe this is your first time here, but if you were here earlier in the summer, you might remember way back, way back two months ago when Dudley, Dr. Dudley here started the sermon series and he talked about the gospel and this is what he said. He said, "The gospel doesn't just change me so I can go to heaven. It changes everything. It's not just something we believe, it's something we participate in." Now if you've been going through the reading plan in the Book of Mark, now if you haven't got the reading Plan and this is the first time you're hearing about it, I'm pretty sure we can get you some of the reading plan somehow so that you can go to it never. Too late to read scripture. Don't worry just because you didn't do it with everybody else.

But if you've been going through the reading plan, you've probably come to find out that the Book of Mark is kind of a straightforward, no frills, detail type of book, very action oriented. The author seems to do their best to not waste your time with frivolous details and get right to the meat of things very quickly and kind of critical, very quick about pointing stuff out when people are messing up. And so here at the end of Mark, we get this account of Jesus speaking to His disciples. And in the spirit of Mark, we hear Jesus rebuking His disciples. It says, "Afterwards He appeared to the 11 themselves as they were reclining at table again." I don't know what's up with the grammar there. "And He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had risen." Mark 16:14.

So we read here right before all this, we read in the Book of Mark that women had gone to the tomb and the tomb was empty and they told them, "Hey, Jesus is going to meet them in Galilee." Or Jesus meets one of them and says, "Hey, go tell my disciples." And these cats on separate two occasions, don't believe them. So then finally Jesus shows up to maybe some men disciples like, "All right, they'll believe me now." Still don't believe Him. They don't believe, even though Jesus has already pointed out, look, I'm going to die and I'm going to resurrect you saw me resurrect other people while you were alive, and here I'm doing it and you don't believe it. So he's a little bent out of shape. You can see why J.C.'s been out of shape with cats, like, "I even told you this was going to happen."

But He moves on very quickly and then He goes and He says, "And He said to them, 'Go into the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved and whoever does not believe will be condemned.'" Now, we do have to address something here today. If you've been reading through Mark, and if you go and read through Mark, you might have something in your Bible, something that goes to the likes of like this. It says, "These verses Mark 16:9-20 we're not included in the earliest manuscripts of the book of Mark." So you might have a note like that, you might've seen that in your Bible. Well, to make a long story short, because we really don't have the time to break all of this down, when we look at the manuscripts that make up Mark, Mark's gospel that survived today, more than 99% of them do contain Mark 16:9-20. This includes thousands of Greek manuscripts, most manuscripts of really translation of Mark as well.

And we get a similar account in Matthew, aside from the oddities of handling snakes and drinking poison and all that good stuff. But there is a biblical argument that the oldest manuscripts are considered authoritative, and these do not include the snakes and the poisons. And if this is something you are interested in, you can look it up, but it's not really a place for a sermon that's more like a Bible study or talking with people, but it's out there. So why are we discussing it here today? Well, because traditionally it is included in most of our Bibles and most of our scriptures and as well, these things that Jesus talks about, the speaking in tongues and handling of snakes and casting out demons. These things did happen when you move on from Mark and in Acts they do, they speak in tongues. There's a story of Paul who gets bitten by snakes and doesn't die.

So these things do happen in the future. So none of this is discrediting or going against what's in scripture. It's just talking about things that will happen. But it is very clear, here's what Jesus does not say. "So now go and grab some snakes. Go and drink some poison to prove your faith." That is not what He said. If you want to boil it down to what He's saying. He's saying that for those who go and preach the words, signs will follow them to show that they are doing God's work. This is what Jesus is saying in Mark and what we don't hear and Mark is saying, "But the Holy Spirit will go with you to do these things." The way it's written in Mark 20, it says, "While the Lord worked with them and confirmed

the message by accompanying signs." Now, how was the Lord working with them if right before this has said that the Lord went up to heaven? Well, how is He working with them? Well, because it's the Holy Spirit that's working with them. It's not as explicit here in Mark, but it's very explicit in Matthew and in Acts. So when we read Mark, when we read this part of Mark, I want us to read as like now Jesus is telling us something new. Now we have a new thing to do. Jesus is just summarizing everything He's already said. If there's something you want to kind of argue that maybe Jesus is saying something new, He does point out you should go and baptize people, but He's just saying that because He already gave the example of baptism, and this is a very clear sign or very clear in wording, like now you go and baptize people as well. So you can kind of argue that maybe that's something new, but it's really just continuing what Jesus was already doing.

So He's simply summarizing everything for them. You've heard me teach, you've seen me work miracles. I've taught you everything I can teach you. Now it's time for you to go out into the world and live it. When I thought about this, I thought about my wife. Many of you don't know my wife. She's not here on Sundays. She works on Sundays because she's a dance teacher. She teaches hip-hop, jazz and lyrical. And I immediately thought of her when I read through this because I've watched my wife for years teach students, students from little age to adults getting ready for recitals and shows. I knew my wife when she was just a dancer herself. She's been dancing since she was a kid. And so I asked her, I'm like, "How does it feel when it's time for your kids to go and do a recital or it's time to go do a show?"

And she says, "Well..." Her students, she gets them ready for months. I've watched her do this. So she teaches them the moves. She helps them with their technique. She gives them private lessons if they need them, but then it does come down time to show time. And now it's time for them to do everything that she has taught them, all the wisdom that she has bestowed upon them, and it's time for them to perform. It's time for them to interpret what they've learned and time for them to do it. And I asked her, "How do you feel when these kids go out there or adults, even?" As she's taught adults as well. And she's like, "Well, a lot of how I feel it really depends on their performance is how well that I have prepared them."

She says, "I know who's done the work. I know how well they've done. I've worked with them, I've helped them. And so I know I've done as much as I can, and I know their preparation. So I know most likely how they'll do, and it's time for me to trust them to interpret what I've taught them to now make it their own and dance out there." And for most students, they don't just do one recital, one and done. If any of you have kids in recital or in dance, you know that one and done is not typically there's a lot of them. And I heard from one of people from [inaudible 00:11:33] like they never end.

My wife's a teacher. You don't got to tell me, I've been to plenty of recitals. But once they hit the stage, once those students hit the stage, they go from being people who do dance to people who are dancers. They're no longer learning. I mean, they'll continue to learn, but they are now dancers and many of them continue that those who love it, they live and breathe dance. That is what I think Jesus is saying here. He says, "Look, I've taught you everything that I'm going to teach you. My time on Earth is done, but now with the power of the Holy Spirit, it's time for you to go and live it." And although Jesus may not be around in physical form, the Holy Spirit will help and guide them and continue to teach them. And also we see here that you're not to do it alone.

Community is key to this. Even Jesus himself didn't roll alone. He had 12 homies to go with them. So He's telling 11 of them, He's entrusting the disciples to go now and preach this gospel that they have learned from Him in community. And let's just, for the sake of argument, let's just say that this part of Mark isn't included. If we want to go down that road like, well, I don't know if we should really listen to what's going on here. Let's go to say that, okay, it wasn't included. Well, is the command any different? Let's go back to Mark eight. If it ends at Mark eight, what does it say in Mark eight? In Mark eight, it says that the angel was in the tomb. The women go see that Jesus not there. And the angel says to them, "But go tell His disciples in Peter that He is going before you to Galilee." About Jesus.

And it says, "There, you will see Him just as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb, from trembling and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid." That is not what the angel said. "Go and tell people about Jesus." If we go to the end of Matthew again, "Go ye therefore make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the meaning of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." And if that's not good enough, go to the end of Luke where it says again, Jesus' final word says and talks about teaching people about Christ says that... And baptize them and says, "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem."

And if that's still not good enough with you, we can look at the book of John who's not part of the synoptic gospels, written, very different tone. But in there, there's a conversation and Jesus and a couple of His homies and He says things like, "Go and feed my sheep and follow me." So regardless whether it's there or not, the call is the same. Go and tell people about Jesus. Go and live the gospel. In Christianity, we have this phrase of saying it's like we want to be Christ-like. And for those of you who've heard me preach, you've heard me say this before, if this is your first time welcome, it'll be your first time. As I've said before, if you want to be Christ-like, you kind of need to know what Christ was like. And if you've gone through Mark, you know what Christ was like. That's why in the sermon series we've talked about the parables of the four soils where the farmer pulls out the seed that's spreading the gospel, that's spreading the word.

This was always the plan. It was in there. We see that Jesus met questionable people, people who were not accepted by the culture, and He ate with them. He dined with them. We see that Jesus healed people. We see that He spoke truth and grace. We see that He crossed cultural barriers and talked to Samaritans and others. We see that He spoke with women when it was culturally inappropriate and He healed them. We see that He fed people spiritually and physically. We see what Christ was like in Mark. We already have the information. It's just now time for us to do it. And Jesus put His trust into the 11 disciples to interpret that the way that they were going to. The teaching was the same, but each one of them might have done it differently. Just like He's entrusted each one of us. When He said, "Go and love your neighbor as yourself."

Well, that's the command but how you do that might be differently. How we love our neighbors, some of us might feed our neighbors. Some of us might go to their parties and go to the birthday party. Some of us might be present, some of us might help them financially. Some of us might invite them into our homes. We will all do that differently. But the command is the same. Love your neighbor as yourself. And here at BelPres, we've had a history of seeing people who are living the gospel, who have done that. Well, currently right now, we have this Refugee Resettlement ministry that we're looking at how we can help those who are coming as refugees. We have New Hope who are a bunch of refugees, most of them who are here, and how they're as well living out the gospel. We have Auto Angels, people who are helping people with vehicles who can't afford them.

Jubilee Reach, who helps families with the school districts in meeting their needs. We've helped the homeless, helping youth, helping families. You see people who have done the gospel, who live the gospel, and what that equates. So on a personal level, I want to share something and I just want you to listen to the sequence of events. I've tried to couple it together as best as I could, but information's a little quirky. So it may not be exact, but this is what I know. Sometime, I think in the 40s or the 50s, there was a group of a church in South Arizona who decided to go do ministry at the border. And they went to San Luis Sonora, Mexico, which is my hometown. Half of it's in Mexico, half of it's in America. And they decided to go spread the gospel there.

So they planted a church there. Now, my Tia, Ramona... Tia means aunt, for those of you who don't speak Spanish, Tia Ramona decided to come to the U.S. And she came to Seattle in the 70s. And when she came here, she heard of the gospel because my family were cultural Christians. They didn't go to church and stuff like... They were just, "Yeah, we're Christians. We do this stuff." But they didn't really do anything about it. Well, my Tia Ramona heard the gospel when she came back to San Luis. She wanted to make sure her family knew the gospel that she knew now. So she went to this small little... As my mom describes, this little Adobe church, this little tiny church that they planted in San Luis. And she went there and she talked to the people that says, look, "I want you to preach the gospel to my family. I want you to share the gospel with them."

So this old cat, Hermano Manuel. Hermano means brother, I don't know if he was a deacon or an elder. He decided to go on his bike in the hot sand because we didn't have paved roads then, to go and speak the gospel in our neighborhood and to my family. My mom was kind of mean to him because he would come by and my mom was really big in the telenovelas. Telenovelas is soap operas. Look, if you think your soap operas are dramatic, you got to watch some telenovelas. Those cats are dramatic. So my mom was into telenovelas and Biscuits would come and knock, and they're just like, "I don't want to hear what you got to say. I'm watching my telenovelas." She's like, "We were kind of mean to him. We kind of shooed him away a lot." But finally they took pity on him because it was hot, offered him some water and let him in. And from there, let's hear what you have to say. And it was from him that my family was converted. My family then now lived the gospel.

Now my Tia Ramona, she was a fearless woman. She was somebody who understood what it meant to live the gospel. She was someone who was going to help people regardless. She was courageous. She shared the gospel wherever she went. See, I stand before you, not on my own accord. I stand before you on the shoulders of two women, my mother for one who taught me everything about faith, trusting in God, even when everything is against you. That is where I learned my faith from, not from my father. My mother actually led my father to Christ. And what I learned about evangelizing, what I've learned about helping people, I learned from my Tia Ramona, she was fearless. She let nothing stop her in helping people. She came back to the U.S. She became a social worker.

And she would get in trouble as being a social worker because she would do things that you weren't supposed to do as social worker because she would share the gospel and they would tell her like, "You can't do that. You're supposed to help them." And if they were in need and they didn't have a place to stay, she would bring them to their house and house them. And they're like, "You're breaking protocol. You can't do these things." She's like, "Well, I know what's in scripture and I know when people need help, I have to step up because that's what Jesus did."

She got in trouble. She got fired several times, but she let nothing stop her from living out the gospel. I stand before you, not on my own accord. I stand before you from these two courageous women. I'm here because somebody along that sequence, faithful people who decided to plant a church across a border, into a people of their neighbors that they don't know. People in that place who decided to take the gospel and share it with others, of a woman who crossed a country and brought it back to her family and then spread the gospel to her family, that family who then came back to this country and spread the gospel to whoever they can go, to whoever they can talk to. My Tia Ramona didn't speak a lot of English, but she didn't only speak to Spanish speakers. She spoke to English people with her broken English. Whoever would listen to the message of Jesus, she would share it.

You might be in one of those positions at any given time. You might be the church who decided to move. You might be the church who decided to stay. You might be the person who decided to go to their neighborhood. You might be the person who decided to speak to their family. You might be the person who went to a different country to then bring the gospel back to those people. But when Dudley says that the gospel changes everything, I am living proof of that. And now all we need to do, all Jesus is saying that we need to do here today is go. That is His final words.

Bow your heads with me. Father in heaven, I want to thank you so much for your gospel. Lord, I want to thank you so much for the Holy Spirit that empowers us, that nudges us, that guides us, that lifts us up, Lord, that helps us through times of trouble and helps us praise you when we see your signs and your miracles as your gospel is being proclaimed Lord. May you give us eyes to see, and ears to hear on where we will go. In your beautiful and your glorious name. And together we all said, amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What differences do you notice between the two accounts?
- What examples in Mark can you point to that Jesus did that aligns with these final words?
- If you were to summarize these final words of Jesus in both accounts, how would you phrase it?
- How have you best followed this command?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.