



# Pastor Ken's Sermon

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**EASTER SERMON**

**MARK 16:1-8**

**APRIL 4, 2021**

## **"A FINAL, PERFECT STORY"**

Christian songwriter Michael Card, in a song entitled "The Final Word", wrote "*you and me we use so very many clumsy words, the noise of what we often say is not worth being heard. When the Father's wisdom wanted to communicate his love, he spoke it one final perfect word*". That word, was "Jesus." And the writers of the gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the first four books of the New Testament that contain the stories of Jesus which communicate God's love so finally and perfectly, all have as their 'final words' – the resurrection.

Yes, each of them contains a little "post resurrection material." John, in a moment of refreshing honesty, concluded his gospel by saying that he could and probably wanted to write a whole lot more. John 21:25 says, "*if everything (Jesus) did were written down, the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*" Mindful that humans can get carried away with our words, he put his pen down and finally let the resurrection tell its own stories. But it was Mark, of the four, who is most judicious in his use of words – his gospel is a full five chapters shorter than John, and half again the length of Matthew.

His resurrection account reflects his penchant for brevity but seems half-finished. Those of you who read the four stories of the resurrection will notice those differences four distinct writers would of necessity (not to mention honesty) introduce. Their accounts of the trial and death of Jesus noticeably dwarf their telling of the resurrection. It's as though they all agreed – what is there to say? If any of you ever watched Mel Gibson's 2003 film "*The Passion of the Christ*" you recall that after two agonizing hours staging Jesus' passion, the resurrection scene was like – about a minute. And the risen Jesus wasn't even in it! I recall leaving the theater feeling cheated. But I think Mr. Gibson got it – the resurrection is capable of telling its own story.

Our minds however give far more credence to what we see, and the gospel writers all knew, within a span of 40 days that is, when Jesus ascended to heaven, that what they'd seen no one else ever would. If it were the story of a death alone they were called upon to report, sad and unjustified as it was, and however morally encouraging they could make it – spun as a heroic death of a man who bravely accepted that fate rather than compromise his principles, things would have taken care of themselves. The resurrection would be a moral story and compete with all the others history and life offer.

We can accept that Jesus died. And if the story we recall today is to have any benefit to us at all, if it is to summon any hope or happiness in us, we must accept that Jesus died, awfully and all but abandoned. But Jesus was raised, for the very same reason he died – because, as Romans 8:39 says –

*nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Jesus died because something had and threatened to keep on separating us from God. So on the third day God overruled his judgement upon sin, and vindicated his Son's sacrifice for us – the mercy and love of God in Jesus was “his final perfect word.”

It should not trouble us that Mark would end his resurrection story saying that no one said anything about it! We have words to catalog the circumstances and feelings associated with dying. With what words can we describe resurrection? “Boy o Boy! That’s cool! How intriguing? Even if we describe it with words like “comfort or assurance” while that’s something, it’s not a lot! With what clumsy words could we describe a love like this?

So maybe we need to return to earlier in Mark’s gospel – when Jesus was saying and doing things that garnered the attention of God’s cosmic opponent – Satan. On several occasions in Mark, Jesus confronts people oppressed by demons. He makes quick work of them – casting them out and sending them off. It is clear who is in charge even if the demons don’t go away quietly. When they protest Jesus orders them to be silent – to say nothing to no one!

This command to “say nothing to no one” will extend to others – those healed, who witness miracles, who see Jesus transfigured. In the case of the demons, it was because they would speak wrongly of God, as people of every age have. On one occasion Mark says one of them blurted out, *“I know who you are, you are the holy one of God...and have come to destroy us.”* A typically sinister way of intimating to all within earshot the ancient deception “God will smother you, control you – in modern terms “dehumanize you” by robbing you of your most prized possession – your freedom. The demons were at least partially correct – Jesus was God’s Holy one – but his final word is resurrection, not destruction. In the case of others, they would speak incompletely about God – he comes only to wow us or tend the physical needs of people.

Resurrection is not simply the opening-up of a grave nor did it “reverse” the crucifixion. It was and is the opening-up of life as it should be lived. That life will include struggle – demons, Mark tells us did not leave Jesus quietly and sin won’t either...the people who Jesus draws to himself through the gospel of resurrection are the very same people he willingly and of necessity laid down his life for.

Mark’s version of this story is unique for its lack of resolution. All versions of the resurrection in one form or another leave things unresolved. Who will believe this...what will it take to convince them? And most important, do I have what it takes? The apparent lack of faith of the resurrection’s first witnesses may be the whole point. God entrusted this news to folks who tremble and, of this topic at least, aren’t sure they know what to say. That says it all.

Resurrection is God’s power in us. It is for an eternity, but it takes a lifetime to sink in! And everything that matters, to those who do believe it, is ahead of you...which, you may have noticed...IS something Mark remembered to say. There’s not much else to say, except to wish you ever grace and blessing as you go zestfully and joyously live out the life God’s word Jesus gives you and do so without a solitary fear about its ending. For there you will see him, just as he promised! To God be the glory...AMEN