

# The best news, ever!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     What is the best news that you could ever hear in your life? If someone came to you and said, hey listen, I've got the best news, I've got the best news for you. What is the best news you could ever hear?

Not good news, the best news for your whole life. The thing is, we often tie good news to the immediate problems that we're facing, don't we? So if you're struggling with money, then getting a job is the best news you could ever hear.

If your family is struggling with an illness, the best news is that the treatment is working for them. Maybe one of your children is finally getting married or is expecting a child, hopefully having been married.

And when we get good news, it doesn't take long for us to tell others, does it? We love to share good news. Today's story is all about hearing and believing in the best news that any of us could ever receive.

But like all news that is stupendous, that's almost too difficult to believe, it's hard to believe. And the first ones to hear about it simply didn't know what to do with the news they were being told about.

[ 1 : 0 6 ]     They weren't ready for the reality of the resurrection. And so today we're going to look at the reality and the power of the resurrection. The reality and the power of the resurrection.

First we're going to look at the reality of the resurrection. And reading our story, if you've got your Bibles, keep it open at Mark 16. And we'll refer to it and we'll refer to a few other places as well.

Now the woman didn't think that the resurrection was a possibility, although they really should have. That's why they ran away, well they didn't run away screaming, but they didn't know what to do.

And it's not because dead people sort of routinely came back to life in ancient Israel. They didn't bump into old ex-dead relatives on their way to the market every Friday.

And yet these women should have known that Jesus was going to come back from the dead for the simple reason is that he had told them. And he told them not once, not twice, but three times.

[ 2 : 1 0 ]     He literally said, I'm going to be handed over and killed and on the third day I will rise again. But why believe Jesus? I mean if anyone else did that, you'd think that person is talking crazy.

That's just crazy talk. No dude. When dead people stay dead. Even in ancient Israel it's just a general rule. The thing is, Jesus' words can be trusted because of what his words can do.

Often in the gospel, all it takes for someone to be healed when they come across Jesus is for Jesus to speak a word of command and instant and total healing takes place.

So if you've been with us in our series of Mark, you would have seen that again and again. What's interesting in Mark though, is that the same word used by the angels of Jesus being raised from the dead here in Mark 16 is very often used by Mark and by Jesus himself when he unleashes the power of God to heal and to save and to change people's lives.

I'm just going to run through a few verses. We don't have to particularly look them up. But just take a note of these for yourself if you're making notes. So in Mark chapter 1, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law.

[ 3 : 29 ] And he says, he came to her and he raised her up. It's the same verb that is used of Mark chapter 16 when the angel says that Jesus has been raised.

In Mark chapter 2, with the raising of the paraplegic, those friends that brought their friend and dug through that roof and Jesus says that his sins were forgiven, he says, raise up.

He says, get up. Pick up your mat and walk. That's the same verb. Be raised. In Mark chapter 4, when Jesus calms a storm, Mark says he was lying down and it says they woke him up.

The verb is he was raised up. Isn't it interesting? And then in Mark 5, when Jesus heals a dead girl and raises her to life, Jesus says, little girl, I say to you, get up.

The verb is rise up. So clearly, Jesus' words have serious power behind them. Will you agree with me on that? You see that happening in the lives of these people.

[ 4 : 35 ] Every time Jesus speaks, and very often it's a word of resurrection, which is interesting. And the power of his words creates and restores life and brings with it new possibilities and new ways of living.

Now to compare how powerful that is, let's compare how powerful our words are. Now, you know, people's words do have power. When we say things, you know, things can happen and we can break people down and build them up, but they don't really have the same amount of power.

But let's check. Today is Easter. And here's a paper clip. How much power do you think it would take for us to get this paper clip to bend straight compared to, let's say, I don't know, getting someone who hasn't walked his whole life to start walking?

Which one needs more power, do you think? The person who hasn't been walking forever. But I mean, a paper clip. It's not a big deal. All right, I've got a few Easter eggs remaining.

Who wants to have a go at getting this paper clip to go straight just using your words? And I've got a little, I've got some paper, I've got some Easter eggs left over. Anyone?

[ 5 : 52 ] Oh yeah, it's worth a try. Must I try? Yeah. I was hoping for some person in the audience. You know, there's always that one.

Janice, yes. Excellent. Okay, you want to, just from there, just shout it out. He can go straight. Yeah.

All right, you don't get an Easter egg, I'm afraid. Oh, you get an Easter egg for trying? Okay, you get an Easter egg for trying. All right, very good. You better come and fetch it yourself because COVID and all.

No, because it could go, you know, it might hit Nolan and then no one will get it. A little paper clip. We can't do that. We don't have the power.

Jesus does. How? How? Well, the fact that Jesus can do that points to another reality.

[ 6 : 52 ] That the disciples were missing out on when they didn't trust Jesus' words to create the reality they described. I will raise again from the dead. No, you know, talk is cheap, buddy.

Can you really do that? Well, yes. But how? They should have been reminded, as Jesus is speaking and changing people's lives, they should have been reminded of how God, their God, that they all know about, works in the Old Testament.

They should have trusted Jesus because his word works the same way that God's word works in the Old Testament. God's word creates the reality it describes.

Do you remember how God literally created the universe? By speaking. When you read the creation account of Genesis chapter 1, it says again and again, And God said, All the stars in the universe, just like that.

All the planets. God said, let there be life. All the trees. All the bushes. All the animals. This amazing universe with all its physicality.

[ 8 : 11 ] By having words spoken and there it goes. God's word has creative power behind it. When God speaks, things happen. You agree with me on that?

We see this in Genesis 1. Here's a summary, a good summary, in Psalm 33. The Psalms are full of this as well. Psalm 33 says, For the word of the Lord is right and true.

Interesting little statement. The word of the Lord is right and true. True here means it creates reality. Truth and reality mean the same thing. He is faithful in all he does.

His word can't lie. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. The story hosts by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke and it came to be.

He commanded and it stood firm. So when it comes to reality, it is God and his word who get to decide what actually happens in time and space. Does that make sense to us?

[ 9 : 22 ] This is the whole point of the story we read in Genesis chapter 18. God had said that two old people, way too old to have children, were going to have a child.

Sarah and Abraham. Sarah simply didn't believe that God was able to do what he said or that he was going to do it. And so she laughs at the God of the universe. But nothing is too difficult for God, not even raising the dead.

So God's word creates reality. Christ's word does the same thing. He's got the same power behind him as the God of the Old Testament. But what exactly happened to Jesus on that Sunday morning?

He said he was going to get raised again from the dead. What exactly is the reality of what happened at that tomb? So we need to talk for a few minutes or think through a few minutes on the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection and the importance of this empty tomb.

And here we have so many competing ideas. Many of them sound Christian, but they miss the point entirely. A lot of it is due to the way that we tend to think of spirituality versus physicality.

[ 10 : 38 ] And we often think that being spiritual is more important than the physical reality of what God has created in our world around us.

And so some think that Jesus transformed totally from an ordinary physical human into what they think is a much sort of higher level of existence. Claiming that he floated through his grave clothes as he rose again.

Which is why he left, and then he left behind a sort of spiritual x-ray. You know the Shroud of Turin that people talk about? I've actually heard that as an explanation for the Shroud of Turin.

Another common mistake is to say he could walk through walls and through doors. And the conclusion is his resurrected body was much more spiritual than physical.

But this is not what the Bible teaches us. The Bible account is much more plain and straightforward. It claims that the dead human that went into the tomb on Friday is the same dead human that came back to life and walked out of the tomb on Sunday.

[ 11 : 47 ] You've got a taste of that in Mark. Chapter 1, in verse 1 here. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Slami, bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

The Greek there is his corpse. They were expecting a dead, beginning to rot, Jesus. They weren't expecting something else.

That's why they went with the spices. In Luke chapter 24, Jesus comes back to visit his disciples, and they can't believe it either.

And they almost refuse to believe it. And he says, okay, well let me show you something. I'm assuming he pulled up his sleeves to show them the marks that the nails made.

And he says, put your hands here. Feel my side. A ghost doesn't have flesh and bone as you see that I have.

[ 12 : 46 ] You can read that account in Luke 24. John has a very similar account at the end of his gospel. This is why the empty tomb is so important.

The same body that went in is the same body that walked out. Jesus didn't get a new sort of spirit body. He didn't go back to being just God again. Not that that's just God. But the human that had nails driven through his wrists and ankles, that bled out on that cross on Good Friday, whose lungs stopped working, and whose heart stopped beating, is the same human who on Sunday, whose heart started beating again.

Who took another gulp of oxygen. Whose lungs filled up with air. Whose eyes flung open. And whose nail-pierced feet walked out on that Sunday.

And why that's so important for us is because the New Testament places the best news that we can hear about us squarely on what happened to Jesus.

Because it says the same thing that happened to Jesus is going to happen to us. The same thing. We too are not going to stay dead. Isn't that just the most incredible news?

[ 14 : 06 ] Well it is, if you want to be alive. Most people I know want to be alive. Most people I know don't want to be dead. I'm just going to quickly quote from Romans chapter 8.

Paul is making this point about what Jesus has done for people. And about how broken this creation is, but how the life of Jesus totally transforms it.

Romans chapter 8 from verse 22. Paul says, What does that mean?

And he says, The redemption of our bodies. Paul says the same thing that happened to Jesus on that Sunday. We've got the same thing to look forward to.

And he says it's in this hope that we've been saved. We Christians have been saved in the hope that what happened to Jesus is going to happen to us. Are you with me on that?

[ 15 : 29 ] Okay. Amen. Amen. Well this is where we need to learn to stop believing our version of reality and start trusting in what God says is real.

You know, one of our biggest problems is that we so often make our problems the whole of our reality, don't we? We're so good at creating our version of reality. And our version of reality always, our problems are always way bigger than they sometimes are.

Although we do face really, really big problems in this life. But we let our problems grow and grow and then take over and color everything that we go through on a daily basis.

We're so good at letting our fears determine our reality. And so what we need to do is we need to learn to use the power of the resurrection on a daily basis to overcome our doubts, our fears, our anxieties, and our opposition, and opposition to us and to our plans.

How does this look? How do we do that? Well first you've got to come to Christ and trust that what's happened to him is going to happen to you. But once you've done that, how do you access this resurrection power in your life?

[ 16 : 37 ] Well very often it's going to look and sound like reminding yourself that yes, indeed, Jesus has been raised up and he's been raised up for me. Ephesians 1 says, we have been raised up with Christ into the heavenly places.

If you're a Christian, there's another truth to your reality. That the power of the resurrection is flowing in our veins. I need to tell myself that every form of evil, anything that mars God's creation, has been decisively overcome and defeated by the resurrection.

That means I've got a new reality to live for. I've got a new reality to live in. I'm going to live in the reality of the resurrection and not let my old reality rule over me.

I'm going to let the new reality created by God rule over my response to the world around me. And so the reality of the resurrection combats the reality that we think we're in.

Or the version of reality we tell ourselves. The woman thought Jesus was going to stay dead. But the reality is that he didn't. And that made all the difference to his disciples.

[ 17 : 51 ] So that's the reality of the resurrection. And how the empty tomb tells us about the physicality of it. The realness of it. It's a real event. And so it has real consequences in time and space.

In our lives. What about the power of the resurrection? What then does the resurrection achieve for us as Jesus' followers? We know it's real.

We know what it did for Jesus. But what does it do for us? Well, the first thing it does in Mark is restore broken relationships. Back in Mark 16.

Just notice that verse 7. Where the angel is speaking to the ladies. He's not here. He's risen. See the place where they laid him. You can look.

He's not there. But go. Tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you into Galilee.

[ 18 : 50 ] There you will see him. Just as he told you. Go and tell his disciples and Peter. Now why do you think Mark tells us about Peter there?

Well, we know what happened with Peter. Just a few hours, days before he denied Jesus. These are amazing words. Jesus was all alone when he died.

Forsaken by his friends. Betrayed by one. Denied by another. And here the first thing he wants his friends to know is he wants to have them back as his friends. Go and tell them to meet me in Galilee.

I'm going to meet them there. I said I'm going to meet them there. And Peter. Tell Peter to come along as well. So here's what resurrection power does. It brings the creative life of heaven into the reality of the brokenness of this world and then it totally transforms it.

The resurrection takes things that are broken and dead and gives them a new chance to rise up, to grow, to change and develop and flourish.

[ 20 : 03 ] Here in Mark it starts with restored relationships. Jesus is going to forgive his disciples and reestablish them as his friends and repurpose them as his leaders of this new movement that he's going to start.

Which, by the way, we're the continuation of all these thousands of years later. Or maybe this is the best place to start with the power of the resurrection in our lives.

We all have broken and maybe strained relationships that need fixing. If you're a believer in Jesus, then you have the same power of life flowing in your veins.

And that means that you too can not only get over broken relationships, not only forgive, but actually become a place where relationships can thrive and flourish. And that's such a nice place to be, isn't it?

When everyone likes you because you're such a cool guy or nice, wonderful lady. This kind of life-changing power, this is the kind of life-changing power that Paul talks about so often in his letters.

[ 21 : 10 ] I've quoted this recently, but Ephesians chapter 1 says it so well. The whole chapter is an incredible chapter about the power of the resurrection. But in particular, at one point, Paul says this to the church.

I pray that you may know his incomparably great power for us who believe. So I pray that you may know, you the church may know, his incomparably great power.

Not a small amount of power, a huge amount of power that's incomparable to any other power out there. Because it raises dead people. That power that you've got, he's telling the church, is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted when he raised Jesus from the dead.

Do you get that? We, here, St. Mark's, 2,000 years later, have got the power of a risen, dead person who's sitting at God's right hand, flowing through our veins.

Isn't that amazing? Isn't that something to hold on to? And then to have your life changed? Just like that? There's a whole new reality flowing through our veins. And through our mind.

[ 22 : 21 ] And through our thinking. And through our words. And through our past. You know? It's so nice to visit a nursery like Kirstenbosch or Stodd's, isn't it?

It's so pretty. All the plants are growing. They're all green. They're all laid out in neat little rows. Plants are happy in a nursery. They have everything they need to flourish and blossom and spread joy.

They make us happy to look at when they're growing nicely and beautifully. Not like the plants that you might... Well, some of the plants next door at Latimer House are doing really well, thanks to the ladies in the church.

Some of them in my garden are not doing that well. I keep getting told, why aren't you watching them? I'm like, well, there's the rain. Well, that's not enough. Well, our lives should be like little resurrection nurseries.

Places where we have received power to grow. Resurrection power. And other people can come and take their shade and rest and find sustenance and help and encouragement to grow and to get better from us.

[ 23 : 39 ] Resurrection changes me and I, in turn, am able to help others to change. Resurrection power is life-giving power that's been poured into us and then should flow out of us towards others.

But, it can only do so if I tell them about it. And so the last thing we need to look at in this passage is proclaiming the good news of the resurrection.

Proclaiming the good news of the resurrection. You know, in modern shows, when you stream modern shows, each series ends on a cliffhanger, doesn't it?

What on earth is going to happen next? Mark is doing the same thing here. I mean, it's a really strange ending to his story. You know, he could have ended at verse 7.

Go, tell his disciples, his disciples and Peter, he's going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. Oh, happy ending. And then Mark, trembling and bewildered, the woman went out and fled from the tomb.

[ 24 : 50 ] They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid. The woman are too freaked out to say anything and Mark leaves the whole enterprise hanging on a thread, hanging in the air.

Will they or won't they go and tell the disciples? Will this kingdom project that Jesus wanted to kick off actually take, actually happen or is it going to fizzle out because no one said anything to anyone?

Why does Mark do this? Strange place to end this story. Well, Mark is a master storyteller. Ending it like this, Mark is forcing the whole kingdom enterprise onto the disciples of Jesus.

it's up to them now to take the news that they know about, to take the reality that they know has happened and tell others about it.

And here's a challenge for us today on two levels. Mark is asking the same question to us. Are we going to tell people about Jesus? Or are we going to keep quiet and keep this news, this truth to ourselves?

[ 26 : 01 ] But secondly, when we do tell others about Jesus, do we tell them about the reality of the resurrection? Because that's the first thing that they're going to hear about.

Hey, Jesus is alive. They're not going to hear, hey, Jesus loves you. Yes, we know he loved us. You know, he's dead now though.

So the news isn't about him loving you, the news is he's alive. That's the thing that gets people's attention. You see, they were not just going to tell anything about Jesus. They could have, and they do, the Gospel of Mark is there for us in that.

But they're going to talk about this one specific thing. He has risen. Jesus was a dead man who's come back to life, and that proves everything about what he said and did as true.

Yes, we must talk about the love of Jesus, obviously. We must talk about the cross and what it does, obviously. But do we talk about his resurrection?

[ 27 : 01 ] So here's a question to us. How does his resurrection, how does the resurrection of Jesus fit into your picture of him and your words about him? How good are you at speaking about the resurrection to others?

You know, we often miss this most important thing about Jesus and tell people about him, when we tell people about him and we tell everything about him except this one important thing that's really the highest importance.

But just look at how the New Testament uses the resurrection in the New Testament writers, how they think about the resurrection in their writing. So here's Paul, for example. Paul is writing to Timothy about how to run a church.

Remember Timothy. Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David, the Christ. That's the message I've been talking about for all these years.

[ 28 : 11 ] Don't forget it and talk about that because that's what makes all the difference. What about Peter? Peter got it. I've mentioned this before. Peter writing in his letter, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This is the thing that gets Peter excited and gets him going. John, writing a letter to the church as the revelation, knows all about Jesus who's come back from the dead.

Behold, he says, he's looking up into heaven and he sees Jesus. Jesus says, behold, I am the first and the last. I am the living one.

I was dead and behold, I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and Hades. Whew! that's a person you have to take seriously.

The whole New Testament writers, all his disciples, they all know that the main thing to get about Jesus is this, his resurrection. This is the thing that makes him the ultimate reality in the universe and makes them the founders of a movement that hasn't stopped and has continued to grow for 2,000 years.

[ 29 : 35 ] And this is what we need to hang our hopes on. And because it's based on the hope of the living one who controls life and death and everything in between, our hope will not disappoint us.

And neither will it disappoint anyone else. This hope, this truth, this life. So let's share it far and wide and let all the world know that Jesus Christ is risen and with it a new power has been unleashed into world history.

A power that brings life and hope to a dead and dying world that gives new possibilities for restored relationships. And that same life-giving and life-changing power that we have received is available to anyone who asks for it.

Let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus, you are the risen one, the first and the last, the conqueror of death and Hades, the one who holds the keys to life and death.

You are the mighty one who has risen again and is seated at God's right hand. Lord, it's such a humbling truth to remind ourselves of, but it's also an uplifting truth.

[ 30 : 52 ] Lord Jesus, thank you that you died for us and thank you that you've been raised to life and that you have given that life to us, your people, and that we've got the greatest privilege in the history of the world to have that life flowing through our veins, changing how we view reality, changing our relationships and letting others know about it.

Extend your kingdom through the words that we speak to others and the lives that we lead to your glory and honor. Amen. Amen.