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The Appearance Imperative

Mark 16.9-20

Series: Holy Week 2026

The Village Church

April 5, 2026

Resurrection Sunday

I. Introduction

- A. Three pastors were getting together regularly for prayer and for accountability sessions
- B. At one point, as their relationships grew and they became more comfortable with each other, trusting each other, they had a remarkable session in which each one began to confess their besetting sins to one another
 - 1. Each one would share his confession
 - 2. The others would offer scriptural admonishments and encouragements
 - 3. They would assure the confessor of their love and support
 - 4. And they would pray for their friend
 - 5. Then the next would begin
- C. The first began and said, "I feel like I really need to confess something to you."
 - 1. The other two immediately encouraged him to do so
 - 2. He said, "I've been lying to my congregation. I've told them things that were exaggerated about myself. Sometimes, I've even made up things. And the Spirit of God has been convicting me of my sin."
 - 3. The others offered their scriptural counsel, their support, and the affirmation of their love
 - 4. And they prayed for the man
- D. When they were finished, the second man began
 - 1. "I've really been struggling lately with lust. I've been attracted to women other than my wife. And while I haven't acted on it, the Holy Spirit has convicted me of my sin, and I really need to confess it to you."
 - 2. They others, of course, offered their affirmations and encouragements
 - 3. And they prayed for the man
- E. The third man was silent; didn't say a thing
 - 1. There was an awkward few moments; no one said anything
 - 2. Finally, one of the first two said, "Now brother, is there anything you feel like you need to confess?"
 - 3. He hemmed and hawed around a bit, and then finally he burst out:
 - a. "Yes. My problem is gossip, and I can't wait to get of here and talk to somebody!"
- F. Now, gossip is clearly a sinful act; and the inclination and behavior is clearly forbidden in scripture
 - 1. It lies in the compulsion to speak to somebody about something

- a. And that something is usually destructive of other people or of communities
 - b. And that's why gossip shows up in lists of sins in the NT along with slander, envy, strife, deceit, and even murder
- G. But wouldn't it be good if we had that same kind of overwhelming compulsion to share the gospel with those who need to hear the good news about Jesus?
 - 1. That you wouldn't be able to wait after a worship service to get out and talk to somebody!
- H. Ultimately, that's where our passage this morning leads us

II. Text

A. **Mark 16:9–20** (ESV) —

- 1. 9 [[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.
- 2. 10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
- 3. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.
- 4. 12 After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.
- 5. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.
- 6. 14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.
- 7. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.
- 8. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- 9. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;
- 10. 18 they will pick up serpents 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."
- 11. 19 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.
- 12. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]

III. **Mark's Curious Ending**

- A. Ok, the first thing we need to observe is that for those of you who are really into Bible study, and you have your study Bibles out, your alarm bells are going off!
 - 1. Footnotes for this passage are literally jumping off the page!
 - a. It's like a construction vehicle backing up: Beep, beep, beep!

- b. It's like you're driving down the road and up ahead you see emergency vehicle lights flashing; you know you have to slow down!
- B. Why? What's the big deal?
 - 1. Well, unless you have a King James Bible, the footnotes in your Bible are telling you that these last verses in the Gospel of Mark – verses 9-20 – are not in the oldest manuscripts!
 - 2. And, as far as the doctrine of the inspiration of scripture is concerned, the fidelity and accuracy of the oldest manuscripts are the coin of the realm of our confidence in the biblical text
 - 3. While the inclusion of Mark 16.9-20 has a long history of inclusion in our English translations of the Bible, there is strong evidence, both internal and external evidence, that Mark, also known as John-Mark, the protégée of Peter, the author of the gospel of Mark, did not himself write this last section
 - a. And that it was added somewhat later
 - b. Not ridiculously later, but after the other gospels were written
 - c. And early enough that the inclusion of these verses was taken for granted by the early church, at least by the 4th Century
- C. So, what – Hawkins – you're going to preach on these verses?
 - 1. You bet I am
 - a. And you'll see why in a few moments
- D. You see, each year when we get to Holy Week I decide which gospel account of the events of passion week to use for messages on Palm Sunday, on Good Friday if I have a message on Good Friday, and on Easter Sunday
 - 1. And this year it was Mark's turn
 - 2. So, I spoke on Mark's text about the triumphal entry last week on Palm Sunday
 - a. And this morning at the sunrise service I spoke on Mark 16.1-8
 - 3. And now, Mark 16.9-20
- E. Now, there are a couple other curiosities about this text
 - 1. Did Mark intend to stop his gospel with verse 8?
 - a. And, what happened to his original ending, if indeed he had one?
 - 2. First, we usually like endings that bring some kind of resolution
 - a. That tie up loose ends
 - b. That put a bow on the story and make us feel like the story is finished
- F. Well, that doesn't happen if Mark ended his gospel with verse 8
 - 1. **Mark 16:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb,
 - b. for trembling and astonishment had seized them,
 - c. and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.
 - 2. Mark? That's how you want to leave it?
 - a. That's the final sentence in this wonderful gospel story?

3. Most scholars don't think that Mark intended to conclude his gospel that way
 - a. That there was another ending
 - b. And that that ending was lost – which certainly happened to manuscripts back in those days
- G. So, why am I preaching on such a questionable passage?
 1. I'm glad you asked!
 2. I'm preaching on it because, as it turns out, whoever wrote the ending to Mark's gospel had a thorough knowledge of the other gospels
 - a. And these verses are an essentially accurate summary of the other three gospels!
 - b. And they cover several important doctrinal issues, including the appearances of Jesus following His resurrection
 - c. The fulfillment of the Great Commission
 - d. And His ascension into heaven at the right hand of the Father
 3. So, you might want to look at the ending verses of Mark's gospel this way:
 - a. They are the condensed version of the other three gospel conclusions
 - b. So, when you read these final verses, you're getting a summary of the inspired scriptures from Matthew, Luke and John

IV. The John Summary

- A. Mark 16:9–11 (ESV) —
 1. 9 [[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.
 2. 10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
 3. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.
- B. These verses are essentially an accurate summary of John 20.11-18
 1. John 20 is the passage that has Mary Magdalene weeping and distraught at the tomb after finding it empty
 - a. Angels asked why she was weeping
 - b. And she answered that “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”
 2. Then Mary turned and saw Jesus standing there
 - a. She didn't know who it was, and supposed Him to be the gardener
 - b. And only when He called her by name did she recognize Him
 3. It appears at this point that she tried to cling to Him, Jesus put her off, saying
 - a. “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”
 4. And then He said to her, “... go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”
 5. Then, just as Mark says, she went to the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord”

- C. The disciples, according to these verses in Mark, were mourning and weeping
 - 1. That's completely understandable, for their world had been shattered by the crucifixion of the One on whom they had placed their hopes
 - 2. So, the verses in Mark indicate that the message of Mary was regarded as too good to be true
 - a. "They would not believe it"
 - 3. Luke confirms this part of the testimony by saying, "... these words seemed to them an idle tale..."
- D. So, these verses – Mark 16.9-11 – include nothing that we don't have from the gospel of John, and the testimony of these verses are confirmed by Luke as well
- E. Bottom line
 - 1. He is risen!
 - a. And there is not just the empty tomb to confirm His resurrection
 - b. He actually appeared to Mary Magdalene (and possibly to the other women who had been with her)
 - 2. And the author of these verses is summarizing the eye-witness accounts of the other gospel writers
 - 3. Jesus doesn't ask us to believe based on nothing
 - a. We believe based on the evidence
 - b. We believe based on the eye-witness testimony
 - c. And the author of this ending has faithfully relayed the good news
 - 4. He is risen!
 - a. He is risen indeed!

V. The Luke Summary

- A. Then, the next verses rely on the gospel of Luke
- B. Mark 16:12–13 (ESV) —
 - 1. 12 After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.
 - 2. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.
- C. These two verses summarize a more lengthy description of an encounter Jesus had with the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24
 - 1. Tying together the experience in the morning with Mary and the women to the afternoon
- D. You remember the Luke 24 episode...
 - 1. That's when these two disciples – Cleopas and his companion – were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus (out in the country as the Mark verses say)
 - a. And Jesus approaches and walks with them as a fellow traveler
 - 2. Jesus inquires what they're talking about
 - a. And they answer by describing the events of the last several days in Jerusalem
 - b. With the crucifixion which dashed their hopes of Jesus being the Messiah

- c. But also with the unbelievable news that the women had shared with the Jerusalem disciples about the appearance with Jesus
 - 3. Jesus then begins to expound the scriptures to them, using the Old Testament, the Jewish scriptures, to show how the Messiah must suffer and die, and then be raised from the dead
 - a. Providing a “Walk Thru the Bible” Bible study to end all Bible studies!
 - 4. Finally, once they arrived at the home of one of the disciples, the convinced Jesus to stay a while for a meal
 - a. And during the meal, as He broke the bread, they recognized Him!
 - b. And He vanished from their sight
 - 5. Immediately, in the Luke passage, these two disciples left the dinner table and headed back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples they had had an encounter with the risen Lord!
 - 6. Now, the Mark verses indicate that when these two returned, the disciples in Jerusalem had trouble believing it
 - a. Whereas the Luke account has some of the disciples, at least, having received the account of the women, verified by Peter and John’s trip to the tomb, agreeing with the notion that Jesus had risen from the dead!
 - 7. But I think you can understand the confusion of the day
 - a. All these reports – women, travelers – of appearances of Jesus who had obviously been dead
 - b. And yet, wonder of wonders, the best possible news – too good to believe
 - c. It’s not hard to see how some disciples were quick to believe and others not
 - d. Remember Thomas – who, even though he had heard of the testimonies of these appearances, would not believe until the he saw the nail prints in His hands
- E. But, all in all, Mark 16.12-13 is an accurate description of another appearance of the risen Christ to the disciples
 - 1. This time to a couple of disciples walking home in the country toward their home in Emmaus

VI. **The Matthew Summary**

- A. Then, what’s next in Mark?
 - 1. **Mark 16:14–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.
 - b. 15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

- c. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- B. In these verses, you have summaries of several gospel accounts, mostly from Matthew
 - 1. Verse 14 – the text where Jesus appears to the eleven when they were reclining at table – moves the narrative to Easter evening
 - a. So you can see how the author is following events as they unfolded on that remarkable Easter day
 - b. First, the morning with the women
 - c. Second, the afternoon on the Road to Emmaus
 - d. And finally, Easter evening when He appeared to the eleven
 - 2. Luke 24 confirms that He appeared to them at mealtime
 - 3. And we see this was the episode in which disbelief was encountered
 - a. This is also confirmed in the Luke 24 account
 - b. Luke’s text indicates it was then that they thought they had seen an apparition or a spirit, and that they “disbelieved for joy”!
 - 4. Jesus, as the Mark verses indicate, rebuked the disciples for failing to believe the eye-witness accounts of His resurrection appearances
- C. Then the scene shifts to Matthew’s account
 - 1. And the setting moves from Jerusalem to Galilee
 - 2. Matthew’s Great Commission account is essentially parallel to the Mark verses 15 and 16
 - 3. **Mark 16:15–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.
 - b. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
 - 4. Their emphasis in verse 16 is on faith, or believing, rather than on baptism which follows, and is the sign, of believing – not the cause
- D. Of course, the Matthew account, as are the other accounts that Mark’s editor summarize, are a more thorough description of events
 - 1. In Matthew are added the authority that Jesus has to make the proclamation of the gospel effective
 - a. As well as His promise of His presence
 - 2. But you can easily hear the echoes of Matthew in Mark’s ending
- E. So, the author of these verses in Mark does a wonderful job summarizing the other gospel accounts
 - 1. He moves from the morning, to the afternoon, to the evening on Easter day
 - 2. And He moves from the tomb, to Jerusalem to Galilee in geography as the days progress
- F. And in every case, the actual appearance of Jesus to disciples, on multiple occasions, is recounted
 - 1. As is the imperative of sharing that good news with other disciples, and then to the world

- G. And of course, the narrative compels us to wonder where we stand with the risen Jesus
 - 1. Will we continue in unbelief, failing to trust the eyewitness accounts of His appearing?
 - 2. Or will we believe, obey, and proclaim this glorious good news of the resurrection of Christ?

VII. **Signs! Seriously?**

- A. Ok, now – then we get into perhaps the most controversial section of these verses
- B. **Mark 16:17–18** (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 “And these signs will accompany those who believe:
 - 2. in my name they will cast out demons;
 - 3. they will speak in new tongues;
 - 4. 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands;
 - 5. and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them;
 - 6. they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”
- C. The signs!
 - 1. And amazing signs they were!
 - 2. There are five of them
 - a. Casting out demons
 - b. Speaking in new tongues
 - c. Picking up serpents
 - d. Drinking poison without harm
 - e. And healing the sick
 - 3. And these are words purportedly quoted from Jesus
- D. First, most of this list are not problematic as summaries of what Jesus said throughout the gospels
 - 1. The apostles did cast out demons
 - 2. The apostles did heal the sick
 - 3. The apostles did speak in tongues as we find recording in the book of Acts,
 - a. And while we don’t have a record of Jesus speaking about tongues, it’s possible He did speak about it, for it became one of the signs affirming the credentials of the apostles
- E. The tricky ones, of course, have to do with picking up serpents and drinking poison without harm
 - 1. These have led to some strange cults over the years
 - a. With not a very good track record!
 - 2. We should be careful not to construct an entire sect on two obscure verses without confirmation of other verses
 - 3. So, just in case, we’ll put snake handling and poison drinking on the elders agenda to see when they want to get into that kind of thing
 - a. Not! Just kidding!
 - 4. At the same time, we do remember that Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake after his shipwreck on the island of Malta

- a. That was when he was putting sticks on a fire and a snake had jumped out of the pile of sticks and fastened on his hand
- b. He shook it off into the fire
- c. And the snake was sorry it had disturbed Paul
- 5. But the bottom line is, that in all of the signs done by the apostle, those signs were God's credentials for affirming the authority of the gospel message of the apostles
- 6. **Hebrews 2:3-4** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 ... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?
 - b. It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,
 - c. 4 while God also bore witness
 - d. by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
- 7. So the signs and wonders done by the apostles were their credentials that what they declared was, in fact, the word of God, and the truth of God

VIII. **The Glorious Conclusion**

- A. And then, in the Mark ending, we have this glorious conclusion
- B. **Mark 16:19-20** (ESV) —
 - 1. 19 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.
 - 2. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]
- C. This conclusion, then, summarizes essentially the book of Acts!
 - 1. His ascension is exactly as Luke describes it in Acts 1
 - 2. And the entire rest of Acts is encapsulated in just one verse – verse 20
 - 3. “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs”
- D. So, there you have it – the ending of the gospel of Mark
 - 1. And while most likely an addition, a wonderful summary of the other gospel writers
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Luke – including both his gospel and of Acts
 - c. And John
- E. So, should we believe it?
 - 1. Of course!
 - 2. Should we obey it?
 - a. Certainly!
 - b. Without having to reenact the signs which were meant to confirm the credentials of the apostolic witness
 - c. Whose witness we have in the NT

IX. **The Believers' Imperative**

- A. But, what then, is the point of it all?

1. Well, it's simple, really
 2. Gossip about it!
- B. Remember where we started
1. Some people can't seem to keep their mouths shut when talking about other people
 - a. That's wrong, at least most of the time it's wrong
 - b. Especially when it is inaccurate or even destructive
 2. But we need to be people who can't keep our mouths shut about Jesus!
- C. Oh, I know; sometimes our actions speak louder than words
1. True enough
 - a. We should never have actions that don't do justice to our words
 2. But without words, the world will never understand
 - a. The gospel is a word-driven gospel
 - b. The gospel is good news!
 - c. Good news that in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against them!
 3. We are not perfect vessels for the proclamation of that truth
 - a. We are sinners saved by grace
 - b. We are debtors who cannot pay our debts – but we have a benefactor who has already paid them in full on the cross
 - c. We are beggars telling other beggars where to find bread
- D. And that's what these say with clarity
1. There is an appearance imperative for believers
 - a. Jesus is risen!
 - b. And He has appeared to many!
 - c. The original eleven (12 minus Judas who betrayed Him)
 - d. And many others beside – Paul says more than 500 in 1 Corinthians 15
 2. Mary Magdalene told the disciples
 - a. The two travelers on the Road to Emmaus told the disciples
 3. And Jesus Himself commands all believers to tell the greatest story of all time!
 4. **Mark 16:15** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”
 5. And that's what the disciples did
 6. **Mark 16:20** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]
 7. Preach it everywhere!
 - a. That's what we're called to do
 - b. And I hope you can't wait to get out of here so you can go tell someone!
 8. But of course, be wise – use some discretion

a. But don't be silent!