

Scripture: Mark 16:9-20

### **The Church: The Embassy of King Jesus to the World**

Beloved in Christ, there is debate today whether or not 16:9-20 belong to the gospel of Mark since some of the earliest texts do not have it.

But the New King James Version accepts it as part of Scripture. Even though contentions exist whether or not it belongs, it seems like a natural ending to the gospel of Mark.

To end Mark at verse 8 makes it a very abrupt, unnatural ending.

The gospel of Mark begins with the coming of the kingdom in Jesus. He is its life. He is the King, He came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom, saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel' (Mark 1:14-15).

The blind see, the deaf hear, the dead live.

On the cross, the kingdom of Satan was destroyed, and in Jesus' resurrection, God has set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). And this is where Mark 16 concludes, also in Galilee: not with fear, but with spreading the message of His kingdom accompanied by signs.

Jesus, our risen Savior, is Lord and King over all – today.

If the Kingdom is His, what are you then? His embassy on earth. The church is the embassy of His kingdom.

What is an embassy? An embassy officially represents its country in a foreign country.

As church, you are the embassy of His kingdom in this world. As Christ's embassy on earth,

1. You have His message (vv.9-14)
2. You have His commission (vv.15-18)
3. You have His presence and power (vv.19-20)

1. His message (vv.9-14)

What is her message? The crucified Jesus, risen from the dead, is Lord and King! But there is one problem.

In verses 9-14, Jesus' own disciples are not believing this message. And they are the ambassadors of His kingdom.

(I ask: how may really believe the message today?). Verse 14 speaks of their unbelief and hardness of heart. This is a big problem. But who is King over their hearts? And who is able to subdue hearts so that they believe? Only One; He who conquered death and Satan.

In verses 9-14, three times the unbelieving and hardhearted disciples are confronted with the message of the King. The first is from Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus cast out seven demons. Jesus *"appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . . and she went and told those who had been with Him as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe"* (vv.9-11).

They had the testimony from Mary Magdalene; they had the Word, but they didn't believe. They refused to believe in spite of their sorrow. They refused to believe, even when this is the answer to their problems.

In verses 12-13, Jesus, the risen Savior and King, now sends two witnesses to His own disciples. These were likely the two men on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24. *"After that, He appeared . . . to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either"*.

Scripture says, *"by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established"* (Deuteronomy 19:15). Here Jesus sends two witnesses. *"But they did not believe them either."*

The third time Jesus Himself appears to them – in Galilee (v.7). See the kindness and love of God our Savior who appeared! This time He severely rebukes them for not believing the Word. *"Later, He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen"* (v.14).

Beloved, apart from God's grace, no one would believe. The fault for unbelief and hardness of heart is one's own. Apart from the supernatural grace of God by His Spirit, no one will nor can believe. We need the risen Jesus to give us new life first by His Spirit. He gives life to the dead. The amazing grace is that we come to believe. It's His work – His sovereign work by His Spirit; none of ours, through His message.

Jesus, the risen one, is Lord and King. This is the life-giving message the world needs to hear! Believing the message comes with His commission – to spread the King's message of forgiveness of sin and life eternal throughout the world! This brings us to verses 15-18.

## 2. His commission (vv.15-18)

These eleven men are His representatives on earth, His ambassadors. Note verse 15, Jesus said to them, *"Go in to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* (NIV has "Go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation"). All creation is His territory. There is this quote from Abraham Kuyper, "There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: "Mine!" His claim is over all.

I recall a friend saying to me, 'True, Jesus is the only way, but He is the only way for Christians.' But Jesus is not a local god (small 'g') along side others in our creation. No, He is sovereign over all. There is one King, one message and only one way of salvation for all people. He shows, as we'll see in verse 19, that His throne is the highest. He sits at God's right hand. He is the way to the Father, all other roads lead to the precipice (cliff).

This is why this message of forgiveness and life must be spread through the whole world. This message is of eternal consequence for salvation or damnation. **See verse 16**, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* Baptism is your badge from King Jesus (remember that children!). Baptism shows that believers belong to Jesus and His eternal kingdom.

When a country is at war, the ambassador speaks and the citizens will share the news, “Our country is at war.” So likewise, Jesus called His disciples to be the ambassadors of Christ sent with a message of salvation. The citizens of His kingdom share the message:

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God is holy and righteous. He is in a position to justly condemn all of us to an eternity in hell. But in His love and mercy, He sent His one and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He obeyed the Father all the way to the cross. He obeyed the law perfectly and suffered the wrath of God on the cross for all who believe on Him. He died and on the third day He arose again, and now sits at God’s right hand.

All who turn from their sin and believe on Christ alone for their salvation will be saved. This is His promise. All who do not turn from their sin will be condemned.

In spreading this message, the representatives of His kingdom face a battle, the battle against unbelief and hard-heartedness. The disciples need only look at their own hearts and understand and be humbled by God’s grace in their lives. We see our own need for the subduing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ – with every temptation, and sinful desire. We understand the resistance, the blindness, perversity of those outside of Christ.

Yet our ambition, as church, should be nothing less than that the whole world be conquered for Christ, which belongs to Him. This is His commission. But we rely on the presence and the power of the King.

That’s why Jesus said in verses 17-18, *“and these signs will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Everyone of these signs, except possibly drinking anything deadly, is recorded and fulfilled in the book of Acts. The taking up of serpents and laying hands on the sick, for example, we see fulfilled in the apostle Paul on the island of Malta.

These signs were specifically signs belonging to the time of the apostles, eye witnesses of Christ in the early establishment of the church. We won’t say much more on this right now. But today, as JC Ryle says “let us never forget, that Christ’s believing Church (embassy) in the world is of itself a standing miracle. The conversion and perseverance in grace of every member of that church, is a sign and wonder, as great as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The renewal of every saint is as great a marvel as the casting out of a devil, or the healing of a sick man, or the speaking of a new tongue. Let us thank God for this and take courage.”

This is an embassy in battle, oppressed, besieged and persecuted. It is the target of Satan. Christ's embassy has seemingly died a thousand deaths, but it always rises to life because of Christ's resurrection power. More than that, it is growing. (anvil)

Douglas Wilson in his book *Empires of Dirt* distinguishes church and kingdom in this way, "The Church is at the center, Word and sacrament . . . the church turns the world into what the world ought to be . . . When numerous Christians are worshipping in the way Christians ought to be worshipping, those Christians --- who happen to be politicians, auto mechanics, teachers, film directors, news anchors, poets, and cafeteria workers – will begin to live out the kind of Christian life that they learned. . . . That will effect the transformation of society."

For this, we need courage. We have His power and presence. This brings us to verses 19-20,

### 3. His power and presence (vv. 19-20)

As the embassy of Christ on earth, we have Christ's power (v.19) and His presence (v.20) with us. See verse 19, *"So, then, after the Lord has spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God."*

It's this that gives the church courage to blow Christ's trumpet, His Word. The walls of Jericho will fall. Christ will fulfill the prophecy of Daniel 2:44, "it (His kingdom). shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." This is His promise, as we spread the Word of His kingdom.

You have His presence. See verse 20. *"And they (the apostles) went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word through accompanying signs."* Verse 20 summarizes the book of Acts in one line.

What beautiful words, *"the Lord working with them"*. Partnering, sharing in. It's building our families and our churches in faith together we may see how rich we are in Christ and see the glory of His kingdom, and its fullness at His coming.

Mark ends his gospel not with fear but with Christ on the throne. May this be an encouragement to you. Christ is on the throne. He knows what He is doing. He is growing His kingdom in His way. Many times, in this past year, this quote from Corrie ten Boom come to mind, "If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God you'll be at rest."

What you don't hear on world news is that in the Middle East, thousands of youth are now coming to Christ through the message of the gospel. A new dawn is arriving (MERF).

In Iran, as of 1979, there were 500 known Christians from a Muslim background. The number grew to 175,000 in 2010, according to the Joshua Project. Today, the average estimates of Christians within Iran range from 300,000 to upwards of one million, according to some mission experts.

Operation World, lists Iran as the fastest- growing evangelical church in the world. More Iranians have become Christians in the last twenty years than in the previous 1300 years.

You are the embassy of Christ on earth, with a message, a commission, His power and presence with you. Through the gospel, Christ brings forth new lives, new families, new creation. And with the gospel of Mark we conclude with a heartfelt Amen!