

**The Weekly Word**  
October 17-23, 2016

Mark's gospel is reaching its climax. Marvel at Jesus' atoning gift. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, October 17: Mark 13- Watch...**

The teaching of the chapter makes it clear that Jesus will return and gather His elect from every nation (26-27). The end is coming. But when? Only the Father knows.

So what do people do in the interim? Do we stop what we are doing and run to the hills? Do we tremble in fear? What? What is to be the posture of people waiting for Jesus?

The answer comes in verse 37. *What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "*

Watch; watch for signs from God that the end is near...

Watch; watch your life so that you are found being active in God's kingdom business...

Watch; watch your character so that you are growing into Christ likeness...

Don't check out of life. Don't fear Jesus' return. Watch, be alert, be attentive to the things of God's kingdom and watch.

Hmmm... there is a lot in that one simple word, 'watch'.

Think about it... I know I am.

*I pray, Lord, that You find me diligent and living as You would have me live... In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 18: Mark 14- ...**

Smack in the middle of the Garden of Gethsemane story there was a line that hit me. Jesus speaking to Peter who was asked to stand watch over Jesus fell asleep. Upon his return Jesus confronts Peter and concludes with these words: *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* (38).

This honest assessment burrowed deeply into me this morning.

What particularly hit me was the weakness of the flesh. How often I want to do this or that good thing, but when it comes around I just don't have the willpower or drive to do it.

Serving the poor is a good thing to do. However, when asked to give up a weekend or a part of vacation, saying 'yes' is much more difficult and may not happen.

Giving a tithe to the church and offerings to other Christian ministries is great, but becomes much tougher when I have to write the check.

Witnessing to Jesus is an admonition throughout the NT, but working faith into conversations can be more difficult

*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak ...*

*Lord, give me the strength and boldness to follow through with all those behaviors I know would honor you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

**Wednesday, October 19: Mark 15- Jesus Son of God...**

Mark's Gospel climaxes with the declaration of the centurion, who cried out when Jesus died, "*Surely this man was the Son of God!*" (39).

There we have it, the second half of the declaration of who Jesus is. In Mark 8:29 Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah. And now He is declared to be the Son of God. With this, Mark has fulfilled his opening statement, *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God* (Mark 1:1).

To acknowledge Jesus is anything short of being God's Son is to miss the message of the Gospel. Is Jesus a great teacher and rabbi? Yes! Was Jesus a revolutionary? Yes! Was Jesus a prophet and healer? Yes and Yes!

But our declaration of Jesus cannot stop with Him being some great human. He is the Son of God! This makes all the difference. As John put it in his Gospel, 'Jesus is God, who became human and dwelt among us'.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:1, 14).

Many people think of Jesus or even revere Him as a great man, even a prophet of God, but Christians believe Jesus is God's one and only Son.

Today I remind myself that the core of my faith is Jesus... God in human flesh who gave His life to pay the penalty for my sins and the sins of everyone who believes in Him and confesses Him to be Lord of their lives.

*Thank You, Father, for showing me the way of Jesus and for sending Your Holy Spirit who guided me to believe. Jesus, I believe You are Lord and God and I will follow Your way and live for You all the days of my life. In Your name Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, October 20: Mark 16- With first century eyes...**

Chapter 16 feels like an epilogue or a brief footnote explaining the third day. It is anything but a dramatic conclusion. In fact it ends with a whimper... women trembling (frightened) and bewildered (8).

The morning after, the Sabbath begins in an inauspicious manner. *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body* (1). These women are expecting to find a dead body that needs to be wrapped in spices. This has probably happened before. A person dies shortly before the Sabbath, so they are hastily bury the body and will be tended to it more fully when the Sabbath concludes. Along the way the women remember Jesus is buried in a fancy tomb with a rolling stone as a doorway. *"Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?"* they wonder (3).

The situation goes from normal to strange when they see the tomb open and some man in white they do not know sitting beside the tomb. This man has a message... things are getting more strange but the moment! *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you' "* (6-7).

What in the world does 'risen' mean? We read this passage today with 2000 years of Christian history and teaching in our minds, but for these women this is a strange and unexpected development. No wonder they were *trembling and bewildered!*

From my vantage point, as one steeped in Christianity from my earliest remembrances, the women's reaction seems to be a surprise and a bit faithless. And yet from the historical vantage point of the women it makes much more sense. Who rises from the dead? Who has a sentinel in

white at an empty tomb with a message that a dead person you saw die and be buried has risen and is waiting to meet his disciples? I mean, this is strange!

As I considered this scenario, it occurred to me that true non-believers, people who don't know the story of Jesus, might react in similar ways. They may not be frightened and trembling, but they could certainly be bewildered. Why would Jesus die on Friday only to be raised on Sunday? Until a person understands the significance of all this it is bewildering.

Maybe, just maybe, Mark's conclusion is meant to connect with those for whom the Christian faith is new.

Stepping into the account in this way certainly helps me sense the gravity of the empty tomb in a new and fresh manner.

*Jesus, thank You for rising from the dead for me and all who believe. Holy Spirit, thank You for inspiring Mark to tell the story in stark detail. Mark's words help me experience the empty tomb in a fresh way. Thank You, Father God, for Your way of salvation.*

*You alone I worship and adore... Praise be the name of the Lord, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Friday, October 21: Psalm 130- A gift of forgiveness...**

*If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning (3-6).*

My heart melted as I read these words. The calluses caused by life felt as if they peeled off. My heart breathed in the truth of the Psalmists' words.

*If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?* Certainly I could not stand... sin besets me constantly. Thoughts, actions, motivations, inconsistencies each are constant reminders that I am full of sin. I certainly could not stand before the Lord apart from the blood of Jesus Christ covering my sins

*But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.* By God's love and grace my sin is not the end of the story... God's forgiveness floods my life. I don't deserve this. Thanks be to the Spirit! I open my arms and receive it. Forgiveness... what a gift, like a refreshing shower after a hard day of life. Forgiveness washes my heart and mind and soul. Refreshed I have energy to serve my great and loving King.

I look back at the verse... reverence jumps off the page. I serve with utter reverence for the One who washes me clean, for the one who is greater than all others.

*I wait...* Oh, *I wait* for the presence of the Lord confirming the truth of what I have just experienced. The Lord is the difference in life... He has refreshed my life, drawn me close, forgiven me and loved me.

Is there a better way to begin my day? I don't think so.

*Thank You, Oh Lord, for this time with You. Thank You for cleaning the scum of sin from my life. Thank You for restoring my soul.*

*Cleansed, redeemed, forgiven and restored, I pledge to serve You reverently this and every day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, October 22: Psalm 131- In loving arms...**

This Psalm provides a different feel than many of the Psalms of ascent. I picture groups of people walking to Jerusalem singing the Psalms of ascent. When they get to this one, stillness

falls over the group. A stillness ushered in by a calm assurance of being cared for and loved. A stillness built on relationship and trust. A stillness growing from contentment in God's care.

The second verse, the heart of the Psalm sets my heart to rest. *But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.* Images fill my thoughts. My own young children nestled in their mother's arms, safe and secure. Mama singing to them or reading to them. Maybe they drift to sleep. Maybe they are laughing, Whatever the activity, it is a safe place. A place of affirmation and unconditional love.

I realize that the images of my thoughts have become my experience. I am sitting with my God and God is to me what the mama in my thoughts was to the child. I am safe. I am secure. I am loved. I linger in this place. I am with the Lord and the Lord is with me

Gently I am reminded that not everyone knows about this safe place with Jesus and I am God's herald sent to tell people about this God I know and worship.

Have you stepped into intimacy with the Lord today? I pray so...

*Lord, I am blessed to have had this time with You. I am rejuvenated and motivated to live today to honor You. Grant me the wisdom and strength to be a godly difference maker in my world today. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

## **Sunday, October 23, 2016, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.