

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God Visits Calvary

Scripture: Mark 15:33-41

Code: 41-82

We return to Mark chapter 15 and the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to read again the passage that we're looking at today, starting in verse 22 and reading all the way to verse 41...Mark 15 verse 22.

"Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha which is translated "Place of a Skull." They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh but He did not take it. And they crucified Him and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. It was the third hour when they crucified Him.

"The inscription of the charge against Him, read, 'The King of the Jews.' They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.' Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Ha, You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Save yourself and come down from the cross.' In the same way, the chief priests also along with the scribes were mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others, He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross so that we may see and believe' Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

"When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, 'Behold, He is calling for Elijah. Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave Him a drink saying, 'Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

"When the centurion who was standing right in front of Him saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' There were also some women looking on from a distance. Among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him. And there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

This morning, we rehearsed again the horror of the blasphemy that is going on here. All that is being said to Jesus is disingenuous. It is all, as we read in verse 31, mockery. It is all insult as we read in verse 32. Everything about this is intended to show Jesus scorn and disdain and ridicule and mock the notion that He is any kind of King at all. The blasphemy is so great, unparalleled and unequalled in history that we ask the question this morning, "Where is God? Shouldn't He have consumed the blasphemers and stopped the ridicule of His beloved Son? Shouldn't He have come down immediately and obliterated these blasphemers and protected His Son?" And we found that the answer to that is no, God doesn't come down to destroy the blasphemers, and He doesn't come down to protect His Son. And that is because of what it says in Isaiah 53:10, that, "It pleased the Lord to crush Him, to put Him to grief." It was the will of God that He be treated in this manner and that He be killed.

We know why, that He might be a sacrifice for sin, that He might die in the place of sinners, that He might bear the curse for us, that He might bear the punishment for our sins. So God did not come down, either to destroy the blasphemers or to protect His Son. And you might think, if you were listening when I read the section that we're going to look at tonight, that God never came down because Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Is that an indication that God was not there? That God was not there to punish the blasphemers? He was not there to protect His Son? He was not there at all?"

Well the answer to that question is He was there. In the moment that Jesus said that, He was feeling the absence of God. But God was there. And God was there in a way that you would not suspect. As long as I have taught on this and looked at this, I have never really heard explained what I am going to explain to you. Yes, God was there. And He was there not to punish the blasphemers, and not to protect His Son but to punish His Son. Let's look at the passage.

Three features come out of this account, three separate features. First, we look at the Savior and the consummation of His sacrifice. Then we look at the centurion and the confession of his faith. And then we look at the women and the confusion in their minds.

First of all, the Savior and the consummation of His death in verses 33 through 38, here's the highpoint of salvation history. This is the death of Christ. This is the long-awaited Lamb of God dying for the sins of the world. We understand the theology of the cross, and tonight I want you to look at some of the details of the cross that inform that theology at its very initial point. Words are inadequate to capture the supernatural reality of what is happening on the cross. And again, what I read you is so matter of fact, and so simple, a statement, for example, in verse 33, "When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour," is so loaded with truth as to be almost more than we can ever bear.

When the sixth hour came, it would be noon, according to the Jewish day which began at 6 A.M., or about that time, at sunrise. An hour in the ancient world without clocks and watches varied in length in a world without seconds and minutes and in differing seasons. But the sixth hour was always considered to be mid-day when the sun was at its zenith. And so it was the sixth hour.

The Lord by this time had already spoken three times. He had already said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," which informed thief on the cross that forgiveness was available if he asked for it, which he did and received it. And then He said to John, the Apostle, "Behold your mother," indicating that John was going to have to care for Mary since He no longer could do that and since His brothers were unbelievers in Him. John was given the responsibility to care for Mary and then from the cross He said to His mother, "Behold your son," meaning John. He put them in the care of each other. The third thing He said was to the penitent thief when He said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." And then it was midday.

The blazing sun in the sky at about this time of year indicates the brightest light that day experiences and it is precisely at that moment that darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. What is this? Some have suggested that this is a natural eclipse. Hardly. Others have suggested that this is satanic darkness.

But the truth of the matter is, this is God coming on the scene. Maybe you've never heard that. I'm going to show you that in Scripture. If you read the Old Testament, as the Jews read the Old Testament, you would know what they knew, that God is often spoken of as light...often spoken of as light. Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

But that's not the only place. Psalm 18, Psalm 26, Isaiah 2, Isaiah 60, many places God is spoken of as light and that in the sense of truth and wisdom and holiness and righteousness. His presence is light. His presence is the *Shekinah*. When God manifested Himself to Moses on the mountain, He manifested Himself as blazing light.

However, any reader of the Old Testament also knows that there were times when God is spoken of as darkness...as darkness. And it goes all the way back to Genesis 15 verses 12 to 15, and Exodus 10, verses 21 and 22, and Exodus 19 at Mount Sinai, verses 16 to 18 when God appears in darkness and Exodus 20 verses 18 to 21, and Isaiah 5, and Isaiah 8, and other places, God also was associated with darkness. The presence of God could be manifest light and the presence of God could be manifest darkness.

In particular, there is a theme in the Old Testament that needs to be understood by every reader of Scripture, and that theme has to do with the day of the Lord...the day of the Lord, a technical expression for judgment...a technical expression for divine judgment. And if we go to Old Testament passages that speak of divine judgment, we read things like this, "Alas for that day," Joel 1:15, "for

the day of the Lord is near and it will come as destruction from the almighty.” What will it be like? Chapter 2 verse 10, “The earth will quake, the heavens will tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. Verse 11, “The Lord utters His voice from His army, surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome and who can endure it?”

Same chapter, Joel 2 and verse 30, “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth. Blood, fire, columns of smoke, the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.” All of that is referring to the final day of the Lord, the eschatological day of the Lord that is the final judgment on this world. And it is a time when God is revealed in darkness and not in light. Amos chapter 5, verse 20, “Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light? Even gloom with no brightness in it.” Amos again, the prophet, chapter 8 verse 9, “It will come about in that day, declares the Lord God, that I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.” In what day does the Lord do that? “In the day of divine judgment.”

In Zephaniah chapter 1, “Near is the great day of the Lord,” verse 14, ‘Near and coming very quickly. Listen, the day of the Lord, the day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble, and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” And thus do the prophets speak of cataclysmic events of divine judgment being times of darkness.” Darkness symbolizes divine fury. Darkness symbolizes righteous wrath, final fury being unleashed. Darkness then is the ultimate form of God’s presence in judgment. That is why hell, which is everlasting subjection to divine judgment, is a place that Jesus said in Matthew three times, is outer darkness, where there’s weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in eternal unrelieved blackness. And it is the darkness of God’s presence. He is the one who is present in judgment in hell from noon to three o’clock.

With that understanding in verse 33, hell came to Israel. From noon to three o’clock, hell came to Jerusalem. For three hours, hell came to Golgotha as God unleashed the full extent of everlasting punishment on His Son. Wrath, in the words of Isaiah, with fierce anger, Isaiah 13:9. As God is the true power behind hell’s punishing experience, God is the true power behind the darkness of Calvary, for here He unleashes hell on His Son. This was the cup that Jesus anticipated in the Garden, the cup of wrath. This is why it was such a revolting anticipation that made Him sweat drops of blood, because in those three hours, think of it, Jesus suffered the eternal hell of all the people through human history who would be saved. He bore all their eternal punishments together and did it in three hours.

You say, “If the sinner in an eternity of punishment can never pay the price and thus it’s eternal, how could Jesus in three hours receive the full eternal wrath for all the sinners who believe? And the answer is, He could receive an infinite and eternal amount of wrath because He is an infinite and eternal person. His capacity for everything is limitless and eternal.

The darkness then, listen, is not the absence of God and it's not the presence of Satan. The darkness is not the absence of God, it is the presence of God. It is God in full judgment vengeance, God in full judgment fury. It is infinite wrath moved by infinite justice, releasing infinite punishment on the infinite Son who could absorb all the tortures of eternities of hell and do it in three hours. It is in those three hours that He bore in His body our sins. It is in those three hours that He was made sin for us. It is in those three hours that He took the curse. And at the ninth hour, it ended. Three o'clock, it ended. And Mark records the fourth statement of our Lord, "*Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?*" which is translated, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" The first thing He said after the darkness ended.

How are we to understand that? What does that mean? Didn't we just say God was there? This is very difficult for us to understand, obviously, talking about a divine person. I'm convinced that what our Lord is saying there is expressing the sense that the judgment has ended and He's wanting the comfort. After the wrath is exhausted, when God in full presence and full vengeance has poured it out, the whole cup has been consumed and the darkness is gone, so is God. Perhaps for that moment, He knew God was there in the punishment, but when the punishment ended, where was God? He seems to be experiencing the separation from God immediately after He has born all the fury of His presence. He knew who was exploding judgment on Him. And maybe for just that moment, when He might have expected comfort and compassion and sweet fellowship in the unimaginable incomprehensible exhaustion of just having suffered eternities of hell, in that moment He says, "Where is God?" And His words were prophesied from Psalm 22:1, Psalm 22 begins, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" It isn't that God isn't there in the punishment, it's that He's saying, "Where are You in the comfort?"

This is a very, very important reminder to us, that hell is the full fury of God's personal punishment, listen, but He will never be there to comfort. Has our Lord given here a preview of hell? Punishment without comfort? Punishment without compassion? Punishment without sympathy? Punishment without relief? That's what hell is. So even this is for Jesus to suffer all that hell is, all the wrath, all the presence of divine wrath and all the absence of divine comfort.

When Jesus said, "My God, My God," this is the only time in the New Testament that He ever referred to God in any other way than Father. Every other time He spoke to God, He called Him Father. But He is felling His absence. There's more than that. A double expression like that is a way to say what you want to say to identify the person you're addressing with affection. For example, the angel says, "Abraham, Abraham..." Genesis 22. In Exodus God says in chapter 3, "Moses, Moses..." David in 2 Samuel 18 and 19 says, "Absalom, Absalom..." Jesus in Luke 10:41 says, "Martha, Martha..." And Jesus in Luke 22:31 says, "Simon, Simon..." And Jesus says in Acts 9, "Saul, Saul..." And in Luke 13 He looks at the city and says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem..." And here, "My God, My God..." Divine affection.

I want you to notice that He cried out with a loud voice. After the massive amount of physical pain and the difficulty in breathing had been inflicted upon Him, after the horrendous, mental abuse in the relentless blasphemy and then after God has exhausted infinite hells of punishment on Him, He is still strong and He cried out with a loud voice. And asked where the Father was in that moment when He needed comfort. His cry, amazingly, still the darkness just vanishing, seems to raise no question with the people, or change anything, because in verse 35 when some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He's calling for Elijah." And the comedy is reignited. Here's a reprise of the sarcasm. When they heard it, and they did, because He spoke loudly. "Oh," they said, "He's calling for Elijah." Listen, they heard what He said in their language, in Aramaic, "*Eloi, Eloi*," "My God, My God." They knew that. But in mockery they said, "Oh, He's calling for Elijah." Why would they say that? Because the Old Testament taught, Malachi 4 verses 5 and 6, that when the Messiah came, Elijah would be present. He's calling for Elijah. More ridicule.

And by the way, tradition, Jewish tradition always taught because of the prophecy that Elijah would come in the end, and that Elijah would be there when the Messiah arrived, tradition taught that Elijah returned often. Remember, he didn't die. He went to heaven in a chariot. So tradition said that Elijah returns in times of crisis to protect and rescue the righteous. So, this was more fuel for their scorn, their sarcasm. "Oh, He's calling for the Elijah to come and rescue Him because He's righteous. He's calling for Elijah, the one who is to accompany the arriving Messiah." So they take up more mockery and the darkness has just ended and they're right back mocking. You would think that darkness for three hours would shut down the mocking. But how deep is this blasphemy? How deep is this blasphemy?

It gets worse. Verse 36, "Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave Him a drink, saying, 'Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.'" I don't know what you've thought about that in the past, but that's just more of the same ridicule. That's just more of the same abuse, more of the same scorn and blasphemy. This is a cheap wine vinegar consumed by soldiers, usually mixed with water. Oh let's give Him something to drink. That will prolong His life a little bit. And if we prolong His life a little bit, maybe Elijah will show up and rescue Him.

He did say, "I thirst," as Psalm 69:21 says He would. And He was offered this drink, but only in mockery. "Let's see if we can extend His life a little longer and maybe Elijah will show up."

They've seen it all. They've seen His miracles. They've...they've seen His casting out of demons. They've seen His raising of the dead. They all know Lazarus was raised from the dead because that's a family very close to the city, well-known by the people in the city, the rulers of the city and the leaders went to Bethany to see Lazarus after he came back from the dead. They've heard Jesus teaching. In fact, they heard it during this very week. It had no effect on them. They've seen His compassion and His kindness. They now have seen how He dies. It does not move them. And they

carry on the comedy.

Then in verse 37 we have these very simple words, "And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last." Why a loud cry? Because He has said, as the gospels record, "No one takes My life from Me. I lay it down of Myself." He didn't die because He couldn't breathe. He didn't die because He was out of strength. He cried out, He screamed with a loud voice. In John 19:28 after Jesus was given the sour wine, it says in verse 30, John 19:30, "Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said," and here's what He screamed, "It is finished," *tetelesti(?)*, one word. It has been accomplished. "And He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit." A loud cry, remarkable if He was dying of asphyxiation. Remarkable if He had no breath, no strength, barely able to whisper. But He is strong...He is strong.

In John's gospel it is in chapter 10 where our Lord states this. Verse 18 of chapter 10, "No one has taken My life from Me, I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I receive from the Father."

And then there's one final statement. Luke 23:46 records it, and this is it, "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit." He said three things before the darkness, nothing during the darkness, four statements after the darkness, "And breathed His last."

Now back to Mark. "Breathed His last." What happened is stunning. And Mark tells us of two immediate events. The first one is in verse 38, "The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." There were about a dozen curtains in the temple. But this was the most important curtain because it separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The Holy of Holies into which no one could go but the High Priest once a year, to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat, on the Ark of the Covenant, to make atonement for the nation on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This symbolized the sinners separation from God. No access to God. The High Priest only allowed once in order to sprinkle the blood, in quickly and back out. But the New Covenant of salvation at the moment Jesus died was ratified. He had paid in full the punishment, the penalty justly for all who would ever believe. And officially at three o'clock in the afternoon on that Friday in April in the year A.D. 30, the Old Covenant was abolished. The temple was nullified. The priesthood was voided. And all sacrifices became pointless because the only true and saving sacrifice had been offered.

And when the veil was split from top to bottom, it couldn't have been done by man, it had to be done by God. It was God's exclamation point on the death of His Son. And what it said was, "The way into the presence of God is wide open for anyone." What does the death of the Lord Jesus accomplish? It opens the way. It obliterates the symbols and the ceremonies and brings the reality of salvation to everyone who chooses to enter. God's holy, glorious presence is available, the way has been opened by the death of Christ. It's the end of the High Priesthood, it's the end of the Levitical Priesthood. It's the end of the sacrificial system. It's the end of the temple. It's the end of the Holy of Holies. It's the

end of the Holy Place. The whole system is at that moment null and void.

And everything basically was layered around that sacred Holy of Holies which was isolated and hidden, where God dwelt and no one had access to Him...no one. And all the layers beyond that protected that inner area. And now it was thrown all the way open. At precisely the moment...at precisely the moment, three o'clock in the afternoon, when the priests began to slaughter tens of thousands of Passover lambs so that people could eat the Passover meal that evening. At that very hour, the Passover Lamb Himself had been slain by God and all other sacrifices were pointless...pointless.

Mark doesn't tell us, but Matthew does, that there was another miracle that happened at the time the veil was torn. Matthew 27:51 says, "The earth quaked, and the rocks were split." This is an earthquake, powerful enough to split rocks, a frightening experience. And by the way, earthquakes in Scripture are very often like the darkness. I read it to you earlier, that the Day of the Lord is associated with not only the darkness but with great earthquakes. When Moses met with God at Sinai to receive the Law, the whole mountain quaked greatly, Exodus 19:18. Psalm 18:7 says, "The earth shook and trembled." The foundations of the hills quaked and were shaken because God was angry. Psalm 68:8, "The earth shook at the presence of God." Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

The prophet Nahum writes, Nahum 1:5, "The mountains quaked before Him. The hills melt. The earth heaves at His presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it." The Jews knew if they knew their Scripture, the darkness meant judgment and the earthquake meant judgment. That is why when you get into the book of Revelation and you get to the final Day of the Lord, the eschatological Day of the Lord, there is much description concerning massive global earthquakes and an earthquake that will be beyond anything the world has ever, ever experienced.

Another miracle happened, according to Matthew 27:52 and 53, "The graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the graves after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many." The veil is torn. The earth begins to shake. Earthquakes take place. Graves are opened. Dead people come back to life and proclaim the truth after the resurrection of our Lord. Matthew 27:53 says, "Those that came out of the graves appeared to many...many." This is a pre-figuring of the resurrection.

So did God show up at Calvary? Yes He did. He showed up at Calvary. He showed up in the darkness. He showed up in the earthquake. He showed up in the ripping of the veil and He showed up in opening the graves and giving life to dead saints. He made His presence known.

Verse 39 takes us to the second scene here, the centurion's confession...the centurion's confession. When the centurion who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he

said, "Truly this man was the Son of God." The centurion, he's involved in the execution, he has to be, he's a commander of a hundred men. That's why he's called a centurion. He's a career soldier. He's a good soldier, he's a trustworthy soldier, he's a battle-hardened soldier. He's a boots-on-the-ground kind of soldier, familiar with death, familiar with killing and surviving. He's been guarding Jesus. He's overseeing the execution squad. Probably played a key role in the arrest and everything else that went on, the scourging. He is an eyewitness of everything, most likely from the arrest of Jesus in the early hours of Friday in the Garden, all the way to this final moment. He saw it all, the mock trials, the abuse, the spitting, the punching, the slapping, the sneering, the mocking, the ridicule. He saw Jesus take it. He saw no retaliation. He heard what Jesus said. Perhaps he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Perhaps he heard because he was near the cross, "Today you'll be with in Paradise." He heard everything. He heard Pilate repeatedly declare that Jesus was innocent. And he concluded, "This is no ordinary man." And he now comes to the right conclusion, that He is the Son of God.

You say, "How did he come to that conclusion?" Well we're helped a little bit by Matthew 27. Jesus cried out in verse 50 again, with a loud voice, yielded up His Spirit. That's what we just read, along with this, "Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook, and the rocks were split." Now that would convince him that something special was going on. The tombs were opened, many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many."

"Now, the centurion and those who were with him, keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, 'Truly, this was the Son of God.'" They were frightened by the darkness...frightened by the earthquake.

In Luke 23, Luke gives us his account. Verse 47, "When the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God and saying, 'Certainly this man was *dikaïos*, the Greek word for righteous. So he praises God. He declares Jesus righteous and affirms that he is the Son of God. I don't know what else he knew. But he really didn't have to know much else and I don't know how he got all of this information, but Paul on the road to Damascus was, by the sovereign and divine intervention of God, regenerated and converted in a moment of time. And the thief on the cross was given life by a sovereign spirit in the midst of his ridicule. And here is this Gentile soldier, the first convert to Christ after His crucifixion. And he's not alone. The other soldiers with him had the same response. Some wonderful things happened at Calvary, a Jew, a Jewish blasphemer was saved, the thief, a Gentile, a few Gentiles, the blaspheming soldiers were forgiven and saved and the message is that the grace of God in forgiveness and salvation is extended to the worst blasphemers...the worst blasphemers are not beyond the possibility of salvation.

On the other hand, Luke 23:48 says, "The crowds, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts." Hum...not so funny anymore. It wasn't so funny after the darkness and

the horrific earthquakes that scared them. Not so funny when they found out the veil had been rent from top to bottom. They left. It doesn't say anything about them believing, but I think some of them did. In Acts chapter 2, some of them must have been there on the Day of Pentecost and three thousand repented believed and were saved, and within a few weeks thousands, thousands more.

So what you have illustrated at the very moment of the death of Christ is the purpose of His death, to save penitent sinners, the Jew first and then the Gentile. So we see the consummation regarding Christ, the confession regarding the centurion, and third point is the confusion of the women, verses 40 and 41. This is an interesting footnote. "There were also some women looking on."

Here we see a small group of faithful women. These are women who started to follow Him when He was in Galilee, according to verse 41, they used to follow Him and minister to Him, or serve Him. And there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. We know all about the men, don't we? We know about the Apostles and we're familiar with them, but there was a group of women who had been with Him since His days in Galilee. Way back at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, at the start of His second year of ministry, now we're at the end of the third year, so there were women who had followed Him for two years. They're true disciples. They're lovers of Christ. They're believers in the Savior. And they are, frankly, now baffled. They are discouraged. They are devastated. They are lost for an explanation.

John actually says that when Jesus was crucified, they were standing near the cross, John 19, they were standing near the cross. They were standing there, for sure, when Jesus said, "Behold your mother, behold your son," and put Mary in the care of John and John in the care of Mary. They were right there standing near, John says. But by the time we get to the end, after the darkness, we read here, "They were looking on from a distance...a distance."

The "looking on from a distance" in that phrase there's a Greek verb used four times by Mark and every time he uses it, it expresses a kind of detached observation. The centurion is looking and he's near the cross. And he sees clearly who this is. He is not confused. He comes to make this great confession by the power of the Spirit over his life. On the other hand, these women who have never been confused about who Jesus is are now all of a sudden way back at the fringe of the crowd, detached, expressing a kind of indifferent, almost what we would say deer in the headlights blind stare. They're confused. Mark even identifies the names of a few of these women, there were many. Mary Magdalene who later becomes the first eyewitness of Jesus after His resurrection. Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses. Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, that would be two sons, James the Less is also called James, the son of Alphaeus in Matthew 10:3 and he was one of the Twelve. So this lady named Mary, and there are lots of Marys, was the mother of one of the Apostles, James the son of Alphaeus, not James the brother of John, sons of Zebedee, different James.

There's another lady there by the name of Salome. She is, however, the other of James and John, the wife of Zebedee, according to Matthew 27:56. Why are they there? Well let me tell you something. For all that can be said about the greatness of the Apostles, they were gone and these ladies were there. So much for male courage. Something precious about that, even in their confusion they were there. Slowly they started out at the foot of the cross, maybe hoping for some miracle, something to happen that would make sense out of all of it, and then he died. And they're way at the fringe.

They had been with Him, verse 41 says, when He was in Galilee, and they used to follow Him. That means they did it all the time, regularly, and serve Him, minister to Him. They were eyewitnesses of His entire ministry in Galilee and subsequently in Judea for the last year of His life. They would be the eyewitnesses, first of all, of His resurrection. And they're unique because they're not Apostles. They're not the chosen Twelve. They're not men. They're women believers who used to follow Him, imperfect verb meaning in a continual fashion, and used to minister to Him, another imperfect verb, continually. And by the way, in the gospel of Mark, only two persons are ever said to have ministered to Christ. One, these women and the other in chapter 1 verse 13, the holy angels. So they function as kind of earthly angels.

They're not leaders. They're not empowered like the Apostles, to do miracles. They're not called to be preachers. But they are the truly, precious faithful who while the Apostles have forsaken Him, have not, they're still there. And they will be rewarded because they will be the first to see Him on Sunday morning and the sorrow of those ladies will turn to great joy.

I want to close by taking you back to verse 39 for a moment. When Mark began this gospel in chapter 1 verse 1, he said it's the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It's the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It's only a beginning, it's only a beginning, the story has much more to be told, but this is the beginning. But it is about the Son of God. It's the story of the Son of God. Finally, here in verse 39, a human being says, "Truly this man was the Son of God." And would you like to know that is the first time in the entire gospel of Mark that any human being has said that? It's almost like Mark waits until the cross to have someone say, "This is the Son of God." Oh the Father said it. The Father said it in chapter 1 verse 11 at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son." The Father said it at His transfiguration in chapter 9. The Father said it from heaven, "This is My beloved Son." And by the way, the demons said it, chapter 1 verse 24, 3 verse 11, 5 verse 9, the demons called Him the Son of God so heaven has said it and hell has said it. And finally, a man says it. And what a man, a Gentile, a Roman soldier, the head of the execution squad, and we all say it too, don't we? The story of Mark is written for the very purpose that John gives. These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name." For all who believe that He is the Son of God, from the centurion on, the promise is, "You have life in His name."

Father, we have no words to express the depth of our gratitude to You, for awakening our dead hearts and giving us life, opening our blind eyes, letting us see, unstopping our deaf ears so we could hear and believe, that this is the Son of God, the only Savior. Thank You that You gave us eyes to see pass the ridicule and the scorn and the joke to the truth. We who once before we were saved were also blasphemers. For anyone who does not love the Son and confess the Son as Lord has committed high crime against You, has blasphemed You because You're the one who said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him, believe in Him, acknowledge Him." We confess our own treason and our own blasphemy until that day when You awakened us. We thank You, Lord, for the gift of salvation. It is a gift, it can't be earned, it can only be received by faith. Thank You for the testimony of that centurion finally after fifteen chapters and 39 verses, a person says what the whole story is intended to prove, this truly is the Son of God who came to die in our place, to rise again for our justification.

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