**Preach the Gospel**

Passage / Mark 16:1–20

Key Verse / Mark 16:15 (NIV)

*He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”*

INTRODUCTION

In the past few days, we have reflected on our Lord’s endless love, who washed the feet of his disciples as a representation of his love shown on the cross. Our Lord came into the world to give his life on the cross, and he prayed for us, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). The Lord showed us his unending love by cleansing us from our sins and restoring us as children of God.

Today, we want to meditate on our great commission to preach the gospel to all nations. The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word ‘εὐαγγέλιον’, which means “good news.” But if the Lord only died on the cross, what good news could we possibly give to the world? The death of the Lord on the cross is the climax of his earthly work. But this work is not complete without the resurrection and the ascension. Why were the resurrection and the ascension necessary? Without the resurrection and the ascension, there would be no way to show that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God the Son, who became flesh and overcame the power of sin and death. Because he rose again, we have assurance that our filthy sins are completely cleansed by the precious blood of our Lord. Because the tomb is empty, we can go out and proclaim the good news that all our sins are forgiven by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of our Lord’s endless love, we can go and preach the gospel to all nations.

THE RESURRECTION (1–14)

Look at Mark 16:1–8. Mark tells us that a group of women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—went to buy spices after the Sabbath had ended, on Saturday evening. And on Sunday, very early in the morning, they went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They were wondering how they would remove the stone that the Pharisees had asked the Romans to place there, because they wanted to prevent the disciples from stealing the body of Jesus and then claiming that he had risen. But to their surprise, when they arrived at the tomb, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. So they decided to enter the tomb, but they did not find the body of Jesus there. What did they see? It says there was a young man dressed in a white robe sitting there. Although Mark does not explicitly say he was an angel, we can infer that he was.

What did the angel say to them? He told them, “Don’t be alarmed. 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’” (vv. 6–7). The angel told them to look and see that the tomb was empty. This meant: The Lord has risen! And the angel’s message was that they should go and give this news to the disciples, because the Lord was waiting for them in Galilee. The news of the resurrection is good news because the Lord overcame the power of sin and death, and thus showed us that there is truly power in his blood shed on the cross to forgive our sins. This is good news that we must go and share with the whole world.

But what did the three women who witnessed the empty tomb do? Mark tells us that “trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid” (v. 8).

And well, most scholars believe this is the original ending of the Gospel of Mark—an intentionally unfinished ending. There are good reasons to think this is true, especially considering the context in which Mark wrote the Gospel. It’s also possible that Mark didn’t end it here, but the last part was lost and someone who knew the ending paraphrased it. Regardless, it’s also true that the church has preserved the last twelve verses as part of the canon. Even if the rest of the chapter was written by someone else, the fact that it has been preserved by the church shows us its importance. This final portion is a summary of the other Gospels and the events in the book of Acts. It gives us an overview of the resurrection events and instructs us on what we should do in light of them.

So, verses 9 to 14 present us with the risen Jesus in person. The text tells us that he first appeared to Mary Magdalene. She brought the message “to those who had been with him”—that is, to the disciples—but they did not believe her. Then, he appeared to two other disciples in the countryside, likely on their way to Emmaus, but when they came back to testify, they were not believed either. The first part of the Lord’s resurrection account shows fear and unbelief. To some extent, we can understand the disciples, can’t we? Who would believe that a man who had been dead for three days would rise again?

But look at verse 14: “Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.” In reality, the disciples should have believed. Few stories appear in all four Gospels, and one of them is the Lord predicting his resurrection three times. The evangelists recount how Jesus taught his disciples that he would die and rise on the third day. So, when this happened, they would understand that it wasn’t an accident or a last-minute plan, but God’s plan from the beginning. However, the disciples did not remember his words nor believe the eyewitnesses.

Why was it so important for the Eleven and the rest of the disciples to confirm the Lord’s resurrection? Paul declares, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. … if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:14). In the death of the Lord, the ancient serpent struck his heel, but in his resurrection, the offspring of the woman crushed Satan’s head (Gen 3:15). In the death of Christ, we receive the forgiveness of our sins, and in his resurrection, we receive new life. It is the power of the resurrection that gives us a living hope in the kingdom of heaven. And it is faith in the resurrection that drives us to do what seems impossible.

My high school years were spiritually difficult. In a secular school, many comments from my teachers and classmates left me confused. But after graduating and finishing my first semester in college, M. Timothy, my dad, asked me if I would join the discipleship training that would begin after the leaders’ conference. At that time, I wondered if I was ready to be a disciple. M. Timothy didn’t pressure me. He simply asked me to pray about it and consider it, since it was a personal decision. I thought about it for nearly a month because I didn’t feel ready to be trained as a disciple—at least not yet. But as I prayed, I asked God to take control of my life, and I accepted the training. Over time, I was ordained as a pastor and eventually became a fellowship leader.

However, there was a time in my life when I went through many struggles. The desire for human love led me into sinful actions. I condemned myself because I couldn’t believe what my lack of self-control had led me to do: hurt several people and fail to be a good example to my brothers and sisters in the church. It weighed heavily on me to think that because of my actions, my parents might also feel ashamed. One day, I thought about leaving home and the church. But at a summer conference, I received the word from John 8—the encounter between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. When I heard my Lord saying to me, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11), I cried as I remembered his endless love that does not condemn me. He died for me so I could be forgiven. And in his resurrection, he gave me new life to fight and live in holiness.

Each of us has experienced our Lord’s endless love and the power of the resurrection, which has given us new life. I pray that you will continually remember this love of the Lord and our union with him. I also believe there are some here who have not yet experienced it. But you have come to this conference to learn about the Lord’s endless love and the power of the resurrection. I pray that you have encountered the Lord’s love and have been united with him. When we come to know the love of the Lord, we also sense his presence within us. Because Christ is risen, we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. Because he lives, we proclaim the Lord’s endless love to all nations.

THE GREAT COMMISSION (15–18)

Certainly, the death and resurrection of the Lord are good news for all who believe in him. And if we’ve received good news, what do we do with it? When someone is getting married, they announce it to family and friends. When a baby is born, they joyfully proclaim it as well. These might be two of the most important pieces of news someone could share. But there are other things people share too, like starting a new job, moving to a new city, or finishing a degree. The way we share good news depends on the impact it has on our lives. How much impact does the resurrection have on our lives? Is it something so insignificant that it’s not even worth sharing? Is it moderately important, enough to share only with a few close people? Let’s see what this passage tells us.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (vv. 15–16).

First, we must go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. The Great Commission is so important that it is repeated in all four Gospels and in the book of Acts. This is a commission—a task or special assignment—that the risen Lord has given us. The Lord entrusted this to all believers. We know this because the Lord wasn’t speaking only to the Eleven but to all the disciples who were gathered. This means that it’s not just the task of missionaries or shepherds, but all of us have been called to preach the gospel—no exceptions. The Lord gave the command, “Go.” The word “go” implies deliberate action. It means stepping out of our comfort zone and crossing cultural barriers, actively seeking those who have not yet heard the gospel—the good news of salvation. And we must preach the gospel “to all creation.” We must lay aside our prejudices and preach regardless of nationality, age, skin color, language, socioeconomic status, and so on. Everyone needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. If we love the Lord, we must obey the command to preach the gospel to all creation.

Second, believing in the gospel is a matter of salvation or condemnation. The Lord says that those who believe and are baptized will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned. This declaration leaves no room for indifference. The gospel is not just a philosophy. The gospel has implications for salvation or condemnation. In other words, it’s a matter of life or death. Baptism is a public confession of our faith, but salvation itself is by faith alone. We are saved by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. By grace means that we have received salvation as a free gift. The only requirement is to believe in the Lord Jesus. This truth should awaken in us a sense of urgency to preach the gospel to those who do not believe in the Lord. If we love our parents, siblings, relatives, and friends, we must preach the gospel to them so that they may not be condemned but saved along with us. We must also love the people of the world, because they are suffering under the power of sin and death. They need to know our risen Lord. We must preach the gospel to them so they too may receive salvation.

This conference is particularly special because we are celebrating 50 years of God’s work in Latin America through UBF. During this time, many missionaries and shepherds have worked faithfully to preach the gospel. That’s why we are all gathered here, remembering God’s work, who loves young people in Latin America. For this reason, this message is for you—older missionaries and shepherds—so that you may continue to love us, share the gospel with us, and raise Bible teachers. This message is also for you—younger missionaries and shepherds—because the continuation of this gospel work in each mission field where God has called you is in your hands.

This message is especially important for you, the youngest leaders—I’m speaking to you who are in high school and college. You have the potential to become missionaries and pioneers in new places if you listen carefully to your shepherds and dedicate your time to prayer and meditation on the Word. And don’t think that this message isn’t for you, the little ones—because you too, as part of the next generation, must begin preparing now to be leaders in the years to come. Fifty years from now, many of the current missionaries and shepherds will no longer be with us. I myself will likely be too old to participate—if God still allows me to be on this earth. I pray that it will be you standing in the pulpit at the centennial celebration of God’s work through UBF in Latin America, glorifying God for saving the lives of many young Latinos.

And someone might ask, “Yes, it all sounds nice. But how can I preach the gospel if I’m embarrassed to talk to strangers or afraid of being criticized?” Look at what the Lord says: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (vv. 17–18). You can later study in more detail how these things were fulfilled in the book of Acts. But in short, what the Lord wants to tell us is that he will be with us, protecting us from all harm. Therefore, there is no need to fear what others will say about us or what they might do to us for preaching the gospel. Nor do we need to worry about our own weaknesses, because the Lord is the one who strengthens us. And the Lord sends us the Holy Spirit so that it is he who speaks through us.

Now, look at verses 19 and 20. After commissioning the disciples, the Lord ascended to heaven. Then the disciples went out and preached the gospel everywhere. The fact that the Lord ascended to the right hand of God is a great hope for us. We are united with our Lord through the Holy Spirit who dwells in every believer.

If you have received any grace in this conference—if any of the passages we’ve meditated on have moved your heart—I pray that you also listen to the words of our Lord who commands us to go and preach the gospel to all creation. We are truly messengers of good news, because whoever hears our message and accepts our Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will receive the forgiveness of sins and salvation for eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Personally, I thank my Lord for his grace with which he loved me and is using me for his work. By my own merit, I could not be standing here in front of you. But, thanks be to God, it is not by my merit, but by the grace of God. As I mentioned earlier, because of my many sins, I felt sorrow and shame over my life. But when I heard the voice of the Lord telling me that he does not condemn me, and he gave me direction not to sin anymore, I felt great joy in my heart. At that time, the Lord also reminded me of the key verse of my life: Isaiah 6:8, which says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” Imitating the heart of Isaiah, who decided to give his life to serve God’s work, I also decided to give my life fully to the service of my Lord.

With this calling in my heart, I have prayed for strength to obey the Lord in my daily life. When I graduated from university, I had a couple of job opportunities outside of Guadalajara, but I turned them down, recognizing that my calling was to serve in this city. Later, I began working in my parents’ company. I don’t know how good my performance was, but at the very least, as their son, I had a good salary. However, God called me to study in seminary. In conversations with a friend at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where I completed my Master of Divinity, I mentioned that I had studied for an MBA before entering seminary. My friend was surprised and told me that, with my background, I could be working in a company making a lot of money, but instead, I was in seminary. I’m now pursuing a Ph.D. in theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. One of the concerns for doctoral students in theology is that, unlike other fields, job opportunities after graduation are very limited.

But when I chose to leave behind the prospect of a secure future to dedicate myself to theological study, I did so with the conviction of answering the Lord’s call: to preach the gospel to all creation in every nation. I fully trust in my Lord’s providence. He has allowed me to serve the next generations in Latin America. He has also given me the opportunity to share what I’ve learned with shepherds and missionaries in Latin America and the United States. And today, he has given me the privilege of standing here, proclaiming his message before you.

Last year, we celebrated the First Next Generation Conference in Brazil. During this conference, we studied the Epistle of James. James exhorts us: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). At the conference, we encouraged our young people of the Next Generations to live as doers of the Word, showing Christ in every aspect of their lives. Today as well, knowing the great grace we have received through the death and resurrection of our Lord, let us live as doers of the Word, proclaiming Christ’s endless love to all nations.

CONCLUSION

At this conference, we are gathered especially to celebrate 50 years of UBF’s work in Latin America. God has worked mightily in the hearts of young people across Latin America during these years. And today he is calling us to continue the work of preaching the gospel to all creation. Are we willing to go and proclaim the gospel of our Lord’s endless love? Will we obey this call? The Lord died for our sins. But he did not only die—he rose again. The tomb is empty! Remembering that the tomb is empty, let us proclaim with joy and courage the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that we may carry the message of the gospel in our hearts. I pray that we may preach the Lord’s endless love in our mission fields and wherever we go.

Let us pray for God to have mercy on us and on all the countries in Latin America. Let us pray for God to continue using UBF to raise spiritual leaders in our generation. Let us pray that, 50 years from now, we may gather again to celebrate 100 years of God’s work in Latin America through UBF. Continuing to preach the gospel and reaching that centennial celebration of UBF in Latin America will not happen simply by wishing to reach a number, but through firm faith in the resurrection and a passionate love for the mission we have received: to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to all creation. Let us pray that we may be obedient to our Lord’s commission: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” The Lord is risen! Let us proclaim our Lord’s endless love to all nations!