

Get Up And Go!

Mark 16:15

By **Bryn MacPhail**

We find in the New Testament at least ten appearances of the risen Jesus. In eight of these appearance accounts, Jesus gives an explicit commission, and in five He commands His followers to go into the world and preach the gospel (Boice, *Matthew*, 645).

It would be significant enough to know that our Lord commanded us to *preach the gospel*, but to learn that He repeated this command should awaken us to *the special significance of this injunction*. We should also be struck by the timing of the commission to “Go into all the world” to “preach the gospel”. In Matthew and Mark’s gospel, the commission to “go” and “preach” the gospel is the final instruction Jesus gives before ascending into heaven.

This is significant when we consider how much we value the parting words of friends and family members before they pass away. Final wishes expressed by our loved ones compel us in a unique and powerful way. So, if the injunctions left by departed family members move us powerfully to comply, how much more should the last desires expressed by our risen Lord move us to obedience!

My temptation, as I look at Mark’s resurrection account, is to begin to immediately speak about evangelism. My temptation is to expound the text, emphasizing the obligation that every Christian has to spread the gospel. Yet, I must restrain myself because something must come first.

The first words of our risen Lord were not, “Go and preach”—these were His last words, and before He gives this final commission, Jesus says, and does, certain things in order to get His followers back on track. Before Jesus gives His final commission, He helps His followers to overcome three prevailing obstacles to evangelism; He helps them to overcome *discouragement*, *doubt*, and *disobedience*.

We begin with *discouragement*, something that each of the disciples and friends of Jesus would have shared in common. In order for us to have some appreciation for the discouragement felt by His followers we need to imagine what it was like for them in the time in between Jesus’ crucifixion and the morning of His resurrection. Their leader had been executed, and their own lives

were now in danger. What hope did they have of carrying out the mission of Jesus?

There was discouragement surrounding the prospect of continuing the mission, and there was, of course, great discouragement in losing a beloved Friend. John's gospel describes how Mary Magdalene stood outside the empty tomb weeping. Not only was Mary grieving the death of a dear Friend, but she imagined that the empty tomb meant that Jesus' body had been taken away. Mary was not thinking about any Resurrection; she had come to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mk 16:1). It was bad enough that her Friend had been executed, but now, even her efforts to anoint Jesus' body had been frustrated. Mary's discouragement soon gives way to despair, and she weeps . . . But then Jesus appears, and greets her (Jn. 20:16).

Mary's faith had waned; hope had given way to discouragement and despair, but that all changed the day she was greeted by the Resurrected Jesus.

Discouragement is a debilitating force. And, so long as discouragement prevails, followers of Jesus will lack the necessary motivation to carry on the mission.

Surely, this applies equally to us as well. As individual Christians, and as a church, if we are easily discouraged, we will be an ineffective witness for the gospel. For if our unbelieving friends see us in a constant state of frustration, if they regularly see in us discouragement and discontent, how will they ever believe us when we tell them that the Christian Gospel is 'good news'?

Before we can go and share the gospel, *we must renew our affection for the Risen Christ*; for only those who are in a vibrant relationship with Him will possess the motivation to share the Good News with others.

The second obstacle to sharing one's faith in Christ is *doubt*. Basic sales principles apply here: just as it is difficult to sell a product that you do not believe in, it is difficult to convince others of their need to follow the Risen Christ if you yourself are not convinced of the need to follow Him.

John's gospel records for us the words of a man we have come to know as 'Doubting Thomas'. Speaking to the other disciples, Thomas declared, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (Jn. 20:25).

Thankfully, Jesus also appears to Thomas, inviting him to touch His hands and side. Thomas responds to this encounter with the Risen Christ, saying to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28).

Thomas is able to overcome his *doubt* thanks to a face-to-face encounter with Jesus. But what about us? Short of Jesus returning to us in physical form, how

are we to overcome our doubts?

We overcome our doubts by studying the Bible. John tells us that it was for this reason that the gospels were written; John writes, “these have been written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31).

Perhaps you are here this morning because you regard Easter as a very important day. Yet, what keeps you from a more regular attendance are the doubts that you harbour about certain elements of the Christian faith. What prevents you from heeding the command of Jesus to “go” and “preach the gospel” are the doubts that you have about whether faith in Christ is required for every person.

What remains for you then, is a choice. You may choose to simply live with your doubts, which will ultimately hinder your Christian witness. Or, you can choose to become a student of the Scriptures, and become like one spoken of by Jesus when He said to Thomas, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed” (Jn. 20:29).

It has been recorded that Napoleon often told his troops that the word ‘difficult’ does not belong in their vocabulary. Similarly, the word ‘doubt’ should not belong to the vocabulary of the Christian.

For some, *discouragement* is a barrier for Christian witness; for others it is *doubt* that hinders, and still, for others, it is *disobedience* that keeps us from heeding the commission of Christ.

As I think about those close to Jesus to whom this applies, I immediately think of Peter. John MacArthur refers to Peter as ‘the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth’. Peter seemed to always be saying, and doing, the wrong thing. Without doubt, Peter’s lowest moment followed shortly after his promise to Jesus to never deny Him (Mk. 14:31). Peter did deny Jesus—three times—just as Jesus had predicted.

We need to bear in mind Peter’s propensity for doing the opposite of what Jesus required as we reflect on this Resurrection account in Mark 16. Because, unless we bear in mind Peter’s recent betrayal we will miss the full impact of what the angel says to the women who had come to anoint Jesus’ body. What we assume to be an angel, described as a “young man” wearing “a white robe” (Mk. 16:5), says to the women, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they had laid Him. But go, tell His disciples *and Peter*” (Mk. 16:6, 7).

Why the special mention of Peter? Why not just say, ‘Go tell the disciples’? Surely, this is just like our Lord to single out the person most in need of His grace

and mercy. Peter wept following his denial of Jesus (Mk. 14:72). He felt terrible. The guilt from his disobedience was weighing heavy on him. Jesus knew this, and so Peter is singled out as a special beneficiary of the Resurrection, “go, tell His disciples *and Peter*.”

As I look out into the congregation this morning, I do not know what keeps you from following the risen Christ. I do not know what prevents you from sharing the gospel with others. Perhaps our trouble is that we look to the last thing that Jesus said without coming to grips with the first things that Jesus said.

For those of you who are *discouraged*, there is a more pressing imperative for you to heed. Jesus says, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:28, 29).

For those of you who come here this morning as skeptics; for those of you who come here harbouring *doubts* regarding the Risen Christ, I implore you to study the Scriptures; I implore you, “taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him” (Ps. 34:8).

And, for those of you who have been *disobedient*, for those you who have said, and done, things dishonouring to the Lord, I say with John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29).

There remains a mandate for every Christian; we are commanded to “go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mk. 16:15). So long as we allow *discouragement*, *doubt*, and *disobedience* to fester, we will likely never heed this command.

It is only as *forgiven*, *believing*, and *encouraged*, followers of Jesus will be sufficiently motivated to share the gospel with others.

Do not delay another moment. The Risen Christ stands at the door and knocks (Rev. 3:20).

The question is: Will you open the gates of your heart in order that the King of glory may enter? (Ps. 24:7).

Do not delay another moment—Let the Risen King of glory enter. Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*. If you would like to discuss this article in our online community, please visit our [RPM Forum](#).

Subscribe to RPM

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [RPM](#), please select this [link](#).