



SERMON GUIDE

# The Empty Tomb

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt



# The Empty Tomb

## Easter Sunday | Mark 16:1-8

# Introduction

There are three special days that give Christianity center stage around the world: Christmas Day points to a cradle, Good Friday points to a cross, and Easter points to a cave. Without Easter, the other two days would be meaningless.

Our world is filled with thousands of religions, but only four are built on personalities rather than philosophies. Judaism's Abraham, Buddhism's Buddha, and Islam's Mohammed all died and remain dead. But Jesus Christ did something no other religious leader has done; *He rose from the dead.*

Christianity traces its beginning to one single event—the resurrection. Mark 16:1–8 tells us about that first Easter morning, when grieving women discovered the news that would change human history: “He has risen! He is not here.” That empty tomb gives us hope for our lives now and for eternity.

## Key Points

## 1. Acknowledge the Doubt of the Resurrection

When Jesus died on Friday, the hopes and dreams of His followers died with Him. Despite His repeated promises that He would rise again, no one anticipated the resurrection. The women went to the tomb Sunday morning not to witness a miracle, but to anoint a corpse—worried about who would roll away the stone.

Their doubt makes sense within a first-century context. Neither Jews, Greeks, nor Romans believed an individual bodily resurrection was possible. Even after Jesus prophesied His resurrection multiple times, not a single disciple waited at the tomb. How many apostles heard Jesus say He would rise again? All of them. How many waited at the tomb? Zero. If you doubt the resurrection today, you're in good company—Jesus' closest followers doubted it too.

Even our doubts can be transformed into faith when we encounter the risen Christ.

## Notes

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#### 4. Admit the Decision About the Resurrection

Mark's Gospel ends with the women fleeing in fear, initially silent. "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid" (Mark 16:8, NIV). But from other Gospels, we know these women eventually did tell others. They made the most important decision of their lives—to believe in Jesus' resurrection.

Now we face the same decision: Will you believe it? Will you accept it? Will you share it?

In December 1941, Winston Churchill heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor bringing America into World War II. That night, he wrote that despite Britain's hardships, they had "won the war" because America's involvement meant Britain would survive. Churchill "slept the sleep of the saved and thankful." No matter what storms you face today, you, too, can "sleep the sleep of the saved" because of the empty tomb. He is risen!

**When we decide to believe in the resurrection, we can face any storm with the peace of being eternally saved.**

## Notes

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*Easter Sunday | Mark 16:1-8*

## Reflection Questions:

1. What doubts or questions do you have about the resurrection? How does knowing that Jesus' own disciples doubted help you process your questions?

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2. The empty tomb is an undisputed historical fact. What implications does this have for your faith and how you view Jesus?

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3. If you truly believe Jesus rose from the dead, who is your "one" person who needs to hear this life-changing news from you?

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4. How has the reality of the resurrection brought hope to difficult circumstances in your life?

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