

## Mark 16:1-8

### The Final 24 Hours of Jesus: The Greatest Monument for the Greatest Moment

Since the ancient beginnings of humankind, there has been the practice of societies to mark their great victories and achievements. In our nation's recent history there are attempts to place some type of marker or monument to remember and pass on to others the memory of our great victories. The moment we see these monuments we are brought into the stories behind them.

A group of soldiers holding up the American Flag recalls the victory at Iwo Jima during world War II.

The American flag on the Moon marks our victory to be the first country to set foot on the moon.

A commemorative plaque at the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, Alabama celebrates a victory in the cause for equality over racial discrimination.

On the lighter side of life it has been passed along to us that there exist in our town a monument or marker about a great local victory. Before we show you a picture of the monument, let me share a bit of the story that has been passed on to us by someone who was an eye witness and many of you know.

A Newbern native, who recently passed away, Mr. Milton Newsome once wrote about a football game that took place on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1940. He recalled how that game was a big deal back then because Newbern and Dyersburg were the only two schools in Dyer County to have football teams at that time. Dyersburg High School was then known as the Golden Tornadoes. Dyersburg arrived that day at a Newbern's Harmon Field undefeated and favored to beat the Choctaws by 45 points. Mr. Newsome recalled how the "Tornadoes looked unbeatable, horrendous and invincible." There were 45 Dyersburg players.

Newbern had only 15, most of which had to play both defense and offense. Before the game, the Dyersburg team ran around the field as if doing a victory lap and making remarks to the Newbern players about what they were going to do to the Newbern players in the game. But Mr. Newsome stated that when those comments were made, someone from the Choctaw team spoke up and said, “run a victory lap around our field...it will be the last time you do that.”

At the end of the first quarter neither team could gain an advantage. It was a hard hitting game and the first quarter ended 0 to 0.

Halfway through the second quarter Newbern recovered a fumble. They drove to the 2 yard line of the Tornados. With one last down, Newbern ran a trick play of a quarterback sneak that led to a touchdown and they made their extra point. Newbern led 7 - 0. The first half ended with Dyersburg fans confident the second half would be all theirs.

The second half was played just as furious as the first. Dyersburg scored midway through the third quarter but their extra point attempt was blocked. Newbern held the lead 7 to 6.

The game came down to the fourth quarter with hard nosed hitting by both teams. Dyersburg drove the ball four times inside the ten yard line of Newbern, but three times they fumbled and one time Newbern intercepted. Finally, time ran out on the clock and the game was over. Mr. Newsome described the scene, “those scraggly Choctaws stood as mighty warriors...to tired to run and cheer....they stood there in awe and wonder, bloody and torn.

The final score was Newbern 7, Dyersburg 6. He goes on to recall how around Newbern for weeks the question was “were you there?” Newbern’s coach, Coach Marshall Owens, told the team they had accomplished something that would last the rest of your lives.”

Imagine being a part of a victory that would last the rest of your life? After that great victory for Newbern and shocking defeat for Dyersburg, the schools didn't play for 60 years. Dyersburg coach quit after the game and Dyersburg changed it's name from the Golden Tornadoes to the Trojans.

Years later when Mr. Newsome and his wife, Bertie a former Dyersburg cheerleader, were in Newbern for a visit. He decided to buy a memorial brick being sold to raise funds for the depot's restoration. He bought one in honor of his parents and then he bought a second brick as a monument to remember a great victory Newbern 7, Dyersburg 6, November 28, 1940. (show picture) You can find it on the brick walkway near the main entrance on the fountain side of the Depot.

But this is Easter Sunday. There is one more picture of a monument we want to show you. For the Christian faith, this marks the greatest victory of all and a victory that will last for eternity. (show picture)

Listen to the scriptural account of that victory. **Read Mark 16:1-8**

### **Victory over Evil and Sin v.1**

There were people who thought they had put an end to Jesus.

People like a man named Caiaphas who was a high priest. He along with other leaders thought they that had stopped Jesus.

People like a man named Pontus Pilate a high ranking Roman official, who thought he had washed his hands of the controversial Jesus who had ruffled every ones feathers.

Everyone who had a hand in the trial, torture and crucifixion of Jesus thought Jesus was finished after they nailed him to the cross, put a spear in his side, and saw him take his last breath.

They were like the team who arrives at the game assuming they

had already won.

**But the stone rolled away from the tomb for Christians is a monument that will always claim and always believe God will have the final victory over all evil.**

And with so much evil out there in the world it is hard to believe that some times. And if we're really honest, it's hard to believe that when we admit some of the things we repeatedly find our selves thinking, saying and doing that we know are wrong. In our own ways we can behave like those intimidating football players promising and planning to be disruptive and destructive to those we perceive as our enemies and adversaries.

But the stone rolled back from the empty tomb claims God's power gave Jesus the final win over all the evil forces that opposed him. Easter is the message that the same power that raised Jesus to new life is available to help us defeat the wrong or evil we face inside of us. **Easter means that resentment, hate, shame and callousness of our hearts can be defeated if we put our trust in Christ and not just believe he exist; but we follow him by following his words.**

### **Victory over the nature of death vs. 4-5**

The messenger at the grave of Jesus said to the women not to be afraid, Jesus had risen, he wasn't in the tomb any longer. The stone rolled away from the tomb also claims God gave Jesus the victory over death. Our physical death is the big Boogy man of the soul. Death is like the bully that waits to intercept us as we walk home from school. Death is the question that won't go away. Sooner or later all good things must come to an end and death questions us what legacy will your life leave behind? Death questions us whether we are ready to face what lies ahead?

When God raised Jesus from the dead he gave us victory over fear of death and death itself. Some one sent me a list of quotes this week. One of those quotes stated that growing old is inevitable but growing up is optional. Death is inevitable; but having victory over death is optional if we put Christ first. **Living for Jesus is the way we leave behind the greatest legacy we can and face the mystery of death with courage and hope.**

**Illustration:** I heard recently from one of our folks about a local man many of you know, L.D. Gant. I was told he died a few weeks back from Lou Gehrig's disease. He was once asked if he was afraid to die. His response as a Christian was no! He said he was more afraid of living than dying. He made a claim of faith that it would be more disheartening to live and face one of the most heart breaking diseases we can experience. His faith in a resurrected Christ gave him victory over death.

### **Victory to live each day with hope vs.7-8**

The resurrection story from the gospel of Mark ends with power and hope for living. The way you see hope and the power of God is when fear and discouragement are present. Just like there could be no great story about Newbern's victory over the Golden Tornadoes if there had not been first the arrival of what seem to be an unbeatable team Newbern could face.

The Bible is realistic and truthful. The story ends with the messenger telling the women to go tell the other disciples Jesus is alive and in fact Jesus will meet them in a location called Galilee. He gives them hope that though Jesus died; he lives again. **But here is what is odd about the story. Verse 8 says "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out of the tomb. They said nothing to no one because they were afraid."** Mark's gospel doesn't tell us what they ultimately did. But in the midst of their condition of fear, doubt confusion and grief, the stone rolled away

from the tomb of Jesus confronted them with hope. Just like light shows up best in the darkness, God through the messenger assured them of victory because he gave them hope at the time and place they were in the grip of fear and grief.

The word resurrection means something died and by an outside force, new life was given again to what once was dead. The resurrection of Jesus means we can have the victory to live each day with hope no matter how dead our circumstances appear to be. God gives no guarantee life will be the same, he offers new life = resurrection, changed life. **Romans 8:11 states:**

*“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” (Roman 8:11)*

Those scared women at the tomb had a choice whether they would believe enough to leave the tomb and go tell others what they saw and experienced, and eventually they would.

**Pastor Philip Cook writes, “So the women came. They brought spices, because they planned to anoint Jesus’ (dead) body. Not knowing that he had been raised, they were prepared for a reality that no longer existed. How many of us are carrying spices this morning, holding on to things we no longer need? How many of us are working out of yesterday’s fears?”**

Perhaps today is when you give God another chance.

Perhaps at this point in your life, you consider how God can provide power and hope to you.

Perhaps this time you commit to do more than just believe; but obey and follow God’s hope and power being provided.

### **Conclusion**

It is sometimes said we cannot trust the reliability about stories of the resurrection of Jesus because after all this happened way back then. But is that type of reasoning and logic all it takes to discount truth and claim of history?

Because after all, Milton Newsome says of that victory of Newbern over Dyersburg that people who attended that game will always remember where they were on Thanksgiving Day, 1940. But we are losing that generation of people who were eye witnesses to that game. The men who played in the game are just about gone. Wouldn't it be so unfair if in another 10, 20 or 50 years, Dyersburg fans could say that game never happened; it was just local Choctaw folklore? What if Dyersburg fans, said, "Be reasonable, there is no way a city team of 45 top rate players could ever lose to a small town team of 15?" But many victories throughout the ages have defied logic and the odds.

Easter is God's good news that God can give the victory to us when there doesn't seem to be a reasonable way out as you face your internal battles that intimidate, or you face your addictions, unruly children, aging parents, decline in health, religious concepts, or maybe the confusion of having success in this life; but not happiness.

Every day for us is Easter because every day there can be dead-ends for us to confront. Like those first ladies at the tomb, we have a choice of whether we trust God lives; he is not just a crutch to lean on. We have a choice to gather with others who know Jesus intimately and discover how he lives and how he can live in within us.