

# Mark 17

*They went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.*



A professor of theology in his 30 minutes long sermon does not mention the name of Jesus even once, neither quotes the Bible. A Protestant pastor in his one hour show explains how to get 'blessed' with material riches. A catechist tells his pupils that Jesus can inspire us, but he cannot help us. Most of us have lost faith in miracles. Our God, so small in our eyes, can do very little for us. We go for self-help books and 'do it yourself' solutions. How different from the biblical accounts.

## Mark's Last Verse

The last verse of the Gospel of Mark says: "they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). One need only to open the book of the Acts of the Apostles to read about signs and wonders performed by the first disciples of Jesus. Peter and John, in the name of Jesus, healed a crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-11). Philip in Samaria brought people to faith, because they could see the signs he was able to perform in the name of Jesus. "For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed" (Acts 8:7). Peter was able to raise back to life a female disciple, Dorcas, who was known for her good works and acts of charity (Acts 9:36-41).

Jesus said to his disciples; "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.

But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

*Mark 16:15-20*



Paul's preaching, although poor in delivery, was rich and powerful in its content. It was centered on Jesus and the transforming power of the Gospel. No wonder that he could see the amazing fruits of his work. In the letter to the Thessalonians, he testifies: "our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess 1:5). Unfortunately, we have confined our preaching to mere words. There is no power, no Holy Spirit, and no conviction. In the letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle confesses: "my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4). If a sermon does not lead to conversion it misses the mark. When was the last time you heard a sermon that convicted you of your sinfulness and brought you to Jesus?

### **The Key Words of the Verse**

"They went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). The word 'preached' has a special meaning. It is not any type of preaching, but a kerygmatic one. Its center is the message of salvation offered to anyone in Jesus. Peter stated that the crucified Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and then, made it clear that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12). When asked by the people what should they do, he answered: "'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). Today, many Catholic and Protestant theologians and preachers contradict Peter, claiming that there are other names under heaven by which people can be saved. Who?

The next important word in this passage is "the logos" translated here as "the message". The Logos refers to the Son of God who became man and lived among us. It is not any kind of message, but the message that focuses entirely on Christ. This Logos was with God and was God, everything was created

through Him, and it possesses life and light (John 1:5). He brought us God's grace and truth. That message should be reflected in our preaching. If a preacher can talk for thirty minutes without mentioning the name of Jesus then he does not preach "the message", but his own message.

Only when we preach kerygmatic sermons that focus on the Logos, can we expect cooperation from the Lord Almighty. The word used in Greek is "sunergountos". It is the combination of two words, 'sun', which means together and 'ergon', which means work. Thus, we have the word synergy, 'the cooperation of two or more agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects'. Here lies the answer to our problem. By preaching our own messages, we are on our own. We might have some achievements, but there is no synergy between God and us. Our message may be beautiful, full of worldly wisdom and pleasing to the ear, but it is void of power, unable to convince, transform, and lead to Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

The Gospel of Mark has its beginning, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1), but it does not have its ending. Its last verse in chapter 16 points to the fact that the first disciples of Jesus went forth and preached everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, it is our turn to go forth everywhere and preach kerygmatically the message. It is here that the 17th chapter of the Gospel of Mark begins. We, the twenty-first century Christians, the followers of Jesus, are writing this chapter. Will you join us? Will you be willing to give up your own message and begin to preach the message? The world is hungry for God's word. The world longs for signs of God's love and mercy. Do you want to cooperate with God in this work of evangelization? The synergy between you and God can bring miracles to the lives of others. Would you like to be part of the Mark 17 movement?

**May God bless us**