

**W@W201**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 15:31-32** *In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. (NIV)*

It was not only the passing public who threw verbal abuse at Jesus, the religious establishment weighed in too. Their pitch was about His claim to be Saviour and king. As Mark has repeatedly pointed out, they were so blind; they could not see that Jesus exactly matched the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah. And they wrongly assumed that He could not save Himself. He could ... but He did not want to. He knew that none of those who condemned Him could have any hope of heaven, without His sacrifice for them. No wonder the Apostle Paul was so grateful ([1 Tim 1:15](#)), as we should be too.

Like many today, who throw religious taunts, the Jewish leaders claimed to be open to believing. The final sign, they said, would be an empty cross. Three days later they had an empty tomb and they still did not believe. What had blinded them? Not their study of the Old Testament - that should have turned the light on. It was not lack of information: they had evidence of many miracles which confirmed Jesus' words. Tragically, in their hearts, they had turned their backs on the Light of the world: because they would not bend their proud wills to His authority. They were no better than the adjacent criminals, who poured out their scorn.

Gospel ministry always faces this conflict. The rebellious will sneer where the believing rejoice. The conflicts are often felt in the family, at work, and in leisure time. For new Christians this can be quite a shock. But there is no way to prove what we believe (until our own resurrection day), so like Jesus we have to endure it. But that endurance has a great purpose: you see, it was for such religious know-alls and cocky lawbreakers that Jesus died ... and through your witness, some of them will find the salvation that Jesus bought at such a cost.

**Prayer:** *Father God. You know how I shrink back from conflict, and would rather not suffer abuse for believing in you. But you have called me to such suffering as part of the package of being in Christ ([Phil 1:27-30](#)). Help me to endure for Your sake, and for the sake of my family and friends who need your grace so much. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 15:33-34** *At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" - which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (NIV)*

Three hours into the crucifixion, an eerie darkness cast its shadow over Israel. It was not just to hide the suffering of Jesus; it was a cosmic sign of God's judgement on human sin (cf [Amos 8:9-10](#)). That strange silence was pierced by the voice of Jesus, calling out in the moment of ultimate desolation. The first, and only, time the Trinity experienced separation had now come with great intensity. The word 'Father' was, for that moment, impossible. As Jesus became sin for us, His appeal was simply to God, His God who was so distant, for the only time in eternity.

The weight of God's wrath against our sin crushed Him (cf [Is 53:5](#)), and the 24/7 communication link with heaven was demolished. The Bible's answer to His question is that Holy God cannot be polluted by sin (cf [Is 59:2](#)): that would wreck His Holiness. Instead, Jesus chose to be wrecked - totally. There was no way back from the utter loneliness of being abandoned by Father God: Jesus bore it, all alone ... for you and me.

A fresh gaze at the cross may bring us tears of shame, or the joy of relief. One thing the cross can never do for the Christian, is to promote indifference. That is reserved for those like the characters round the cross, who do not see their own sin there; who have no weeping for their selfish past, and no gratitude for their dying Saviour. Yet, some of those known to you will seek Him and find Him - through your unrelenting trust in Jesus and your patient witness to His grace.

**Prayer:** *Father God. I thank You that I shall never be cut off from You, because I am so grateful that Jesus suffered that agony instead of me. Help me to be the grateful witness you have called me to be, by the power of Your Holy Spirit (cf [Acts 1:8](#)), so that my colleagues, friends and family may not be condemned in the final judgement. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 15:35-37** *When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. (NIV)*

Listening and hearing are two different things. The bystanders heard the 'God' word but because it was considered blasphemous to use it (preferring to us 'The Name'), they assumed that Jesus was calling Elijah (a similarly sounding word). They thought Jesus was calling for help from one of the Old Testament 'saints', although calling the dead is strictly forbidden (cf [Deut 18:9-13](#)). One person thought He wanted the drugged wine. Another cynically just wanted to leave Jesus alone.

There was no call for Elijah; just a heartfelt cry to God that echoed into the emptiness. There was no wish for pain killers; just a determination to see it through to the end. There was to be no miraculous rescue from death; just death itself. Despite the beatings that sapped His strength and brought Him to His knees, so that He could not carry the cross-piece up the hill; despite agony of being nailed to the cross, and the suffocation of hanging there - Jesus now had full strength for his last cry - "It is finished", which can also mean, "Paid in full"! The task had been accomplished, and He then simply stopped breathing.

Some may read this account like objective bystanders. It means nothing to them apart from being a sad tale. But for me, and I trust you who read, it is charged with deep emotion. My Jesus, went through all the suffering - so that we will not have to endure any of God's wrath. That is the best news in the world, the news to bring peace to troubled hearts and the core of our Gospel message. Hallelujah what a Saviour! Do tell somebody!!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Although so many misunderstand You, You understand them and want them to come to repentance and faith. Help them to stop and turn around to hear what You are saying to them, and to realise that Your cross is for their blessing. Please give me the right words at each right opportunity so that my friends might know how much You love them. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 15:38-39** *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (NIV)*

The final moment, when life tore out of the body of Jesus, was mirrored in the temple curtain. This heavy fabric obstruction was placed between the 'holy' and 'most holy' places of the temple. Only the high priest could pass that curtain; and then only once a year accompanied by sacrificial blood - to make atonement for the sins of the nation. Behind that curtain was the space for God's presence. And so the people learned that God was inaccessible to ordinary people, and the curtain was to keep them out.

So the top to bottom tear, that exposed the holiest place of God to all, was a Divine sign that the death of Christ had made an open way into God's presence. In Mark's mind there was a significant link between that sign and the centurion's assessment of Jesus. Unlike many of the characters in the gospel (and indeed the disciples themselves) that man had his own private curtain ripped open. His observation of Jesus, the measured composure of his death and the determined dismissal of his spirit - all these led the hardened soldier to see that Jesus was the Son of God.

The eyes of most of our friends are tightly batted down lest they might see, hear and understand (cf [Is 6:10](#)). But some will dare to look long enough at the crucified Jesus, and the light will come on. Alas, much of our so called 'evangelism', if talking about churches or denominations, is unlikely to do anything more than encourage a further screwing up of the eyelids. But once we talk about Jesus, and in particular His death, God starts to tear the barrier (cf [1 Corinthians 2:2](#)). So if you want your family or colleagues to know who Jesus is, start by discussing His death. It will make for some enlightening discussions!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Thank you taking the barrier away from my spiritual eyes so that I can see who you are. Help me to dare to talk about Jesus on the cross, so that my friends might start to see who He is, for themselves. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 15:40-41** *Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. (NIV)*

Caring, but cautious. That may be a reasonable way to describe these women; but they were much more than caring, they had devoted themselves to the Master, helping in the domestic tasks that often defeat itinerant preachers. And don't forget 'the twelve', they needed meals and washing done too. Of course, the women were not a threat to the authorities; they were 'only women'. A nuisance possibly, but threat, no ... especially now that their Lord had been crucified.

But what a catalogue of divine ministry they represented. Not the acts of service they had done for Jesus, but the miracles He had done in their lives. Mary Magdalene (from Magdala, on the western shore of Galilee) had been released from demonic oppression. Salome was the mother of James and John, the other Mary was probably the mother of Jesus. These women served because of what God had done for them, and because they believed in Jesus. Their devotion was rewarded by the first of the resurrection appearances.

Godly women are marked by a willingness to be around when the Master needs them. They are not seeking prominence, but are glad for Jesus to be centre stage. They do not draw people to themselves, but point them to the Saviour. It is a servant heartedness that pleased the Lord then, and still does today. Many men could learn a lesson from them, not least their own sons who were nowhere to be seen; all, except for Mary's Son who was hanging limply from the cross. He did not quit, but saw His job through to the bitter end. Perhaps we need to reflect on God's purpose of allowing us to feel the heat of opposition, before we run away.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Please forgive me when I back away from the difficulties that you allow in my Christian life. Help me to be so certain of Your love that I will stay with You in the time of crisis - because you stayed on the cross for me. In Your Name. Amen.*

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### Word@Work from BeaconLight

**Read Mark 15:42-43** *It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (NIV)*

It had been a long Friday. The agonising procession to Calvary, terminated in torturous nails hammered through Jesus' flesh - and all the insults that added to the injury of crucifixion. Worst of all was the unique separation of the Godhead, marked by darkness as our sins were punished in Christ's body. The triumphant cry, "it is finished!" signalled the end and His body hung with no more breath. But, as the afternoon pushed on into evening, the light came back to normal and, with the Sabbath only hours away, Jewish law demanded a burial.

Joseph was sat on the council that condemned Jesus. He had disagreed but said nothing to reverse the sentence; and his conscience would not rest. He had either been watching the execution or ordered an underling to tell him when Jesus died. He had also been watching for the Messiah to come. It was that dreadful feeling knowing he was wrong and it was too late to make any difference. This was the last opportunity to honour the Man, even though He was dead. The minutes were ticking by and soon the Sabbath laws would prevent him handling a corpse. So he went to Pilate with speed, energy and urgency to ask permission to bury Jesus. It was risky, he was not a family member and this open reverence towards the criminal might wreck his social and religious future.

How many times have we felt ashamed of failing to identify ourselves with Jesus? And the more secret we make our faith; the more difficult it is to be open. We know we have let Jesus down. Although you may feel that it is too late to honour Jesus in your family or at work, it is not! The time which makes a man or woman is when they stop covering the truth. Asking the boss for permission to have a Bible Study group in an office room, or offering to pray for a colleague in the Name of Jesus will certainly let the cat out of the bag. But it will also be the response that the Lord has been seeking all during your 'quiet phase'. Don't forget, Father God will honour you even if you think nobody else will (cf [Matthew 10:32,33](#)).

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, Please forgive my reticence to stand up for You. But please help me to do so, for your sake, Amen.*

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**Read Mark 15:44-47** *Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. (NIV)*

Without the previous verses, the first sentence today looks as though Pilate was shocked to learn of his own death! And indeed he was spiritually dead because of his sins, and like the rest of Christ-rejecting humanity, without hope and without God in the world (cf [Eph 2:3,12](#))! Of course the text means that the death of Jesus was significantly premature compared with normal crucifixions. The centurion's death certificate was sought and the body was released.

Joseph's personal involvement with Jesus could not have been more obvious. He brought metres of linen burial cloth, enlisted the help of Nicodemus, and carried Jesus' body to the rock tomb along with 34 kilograms of embalming spices (cf [John 19:39-40](#)). Servants would have helped, perhaps the same ones who had hacked out the stone cave: all ready for Joseph, whenever his time might come (cf [Matt 27:60](#)). It was a graphic substitution demonstrating that Jesus was sealed into the death-place which belonged to him.

Jesus became the substitute for us in punishment and death, because he chose to. The price He paid, places an exceptionally high value on us. Yet gratitude and worship is too often an occasional response, and telling others can make us embarrassed. But Jesus did it all for us, and in some way, Joseph knew this demanded his full involvement that day. Perhaps we should think the same!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank you for choosing to substitute Yourself for me on the cross and in the grave. Please wake me up to the debt of gratitude I owe You, and give me the courage to express it in ways that will please You. In Your Name, Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:1-3** *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" (NIV)*

The Sabbath, with its corpse-handling restrictions, had ended as the stars came out on the Saturday night. But practical safety demanded that the women wait until first light on Sunday before they could fulfil their desire to honour Jesus and anoint His body. Mary Magdalene and another Mary knew the location of the burial site; they were there when Joseph put Jesus' body into his own tomb. They saw the heavy millstone rolled down the stone slot to obstruct the entrance, and how the official seals were applied to prevent unauthorised opening.

Logic should have said, "We cannot get to the body of Jesus". But they carried spices to anoint His body. This was a women only expedition, and they knew that the stone was far too heavy for them to roll it up the inclined groove. And it was not until they were well on their way that they wondered which men might help them, despite knowing that there was a severe penalty for breaking the seals. But the powerful inner emotions of love for Jesus defied logical objections that morning. They had no idea that the Lord would task an angel to remove all obstacles, so that they could fulfil that Divine appointment.

Not every illogical urge is of God; perhaps most are not. But when the Almighty plans to use us in a unique way, there will be no logical precedent. Our relationship with Him is not driven down advertised tram tracks which enable us to predict the route, we simply have to follow Him. Unlike fleshly passions, every desire to be closer to Jesus has His own spiritual impetus linked with ours. Like Peter on the water, the impossibility becomes irrelevant as we respond to His call. This may not suit our 'must be in control' mindset, but we have to understand the principle (and agree it!) if we are to serve as true disciples of Jesus. So much for the theory ... the practical class starts today!

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank you for every desire You give me to worship and serve Jesus. Help me to trust Your leading so that I may express the love I have for You, despite apparent impossibilities. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:4-5** *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. (NIV)*

It is hardly surprising that these women were alarmed. Nothing in their experience could have prepared them for this. Yes, they had the words of Jesus filed in their minds somewhere, that He would rise again on the third day: but this was a totally unique event. As they did not understand what Jesus had said, they had no way to calibrate their minds to what they found at the grave site. They had expected a stone across the mouth of the tomb, with impressive Roman 'keep off/do not touch' seals. And they expected to be alone at that time in the early morning.

All their expectations were shattered. The stone was rolled away; the seals were broken. And, as though waiting to greet them, a shining example of God's Corps of Angels was sitting quietly at the side of the tomb - so that they could see inside. With no other male company, the women did not know how to react, except to pump out lots of adrenaline. It was a natural response to a radically different scenario than they had anticipated. But it did not breathe faith. They were still thinking in the small confines of their little world of the expected. It required God's Word through the angel to change their course ([Mark 16:6-8](#)), and even then they were still full of fear.

Every unexpected, out-of-our-depth encounter easily produces the same reaction. But it need not. It would be better if we trained our minds to compare our circumstances with the Scriptures - we would understand more and fear less. If we expected the Lord to work out His Word into our lives and those around us - we would be refreshed rather than flummoxed, as each day unfolds its mysteries. Our hearts will find more peace when we trust God to act according to His Word, then we can know how to cooperate with Him in the worlds of business, management, finance, relationships and, indeed, every unique crises.

**Prayer:** *Father God. As you bring each new day beneath my feet, help me to believe that you are not leaving me to solve all its riddles alone - but that Your Word is framing each day and that You are there to work it through with me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:6-7** *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "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.' "* (NIV)

One of the most frequent Divine instructions in the Bible is, "Do not fear"! That is so gracious. Any encounter with the Holy God is awesome and, if we are not covered with Christ's blood, we properly fear judgement. Fear is, of course, a general response to anything that threatens our life, security or friendships. But the presence of God or His special messengers will threaten all three, unless we know that we are saved from 'the wrath to come'. That was a comfort yet to come for these women.

The angel showed that he knew their intentions (even though they had not spoken), and all about Jesus' whereabouts (which was more than they knew). He invited them to see the empty burial chamber, and reminded them of Jesus' last instructions as to where He would meet them. God's messenger even knew about Peter's feelings of desperation after his spectacular failure and made sure he got a special mention in the message. The key to the future for them all did not lie in their hopes (they had none about seeing Jesus alive again), nor in their ability to 'move on and start again' (they simply did not want to do that), but in the words of Jesus.

Our feeble emotional resources are often battered - and our only hope lies in the Word of God. The God who knows us, keeps speaking to us through His Word interpreted by His Spirit. Apart from the objective reality of God's written words on physical paper (or digital marks on computer screens!), we may fear all sorts of things needlessly. Not that fear is not natural, but the peace of God is supernatural: it controls our emotions and steadies our minds. Above all, Jesus assures us that He is alive and well able to deal with everything: and that He is our friend!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank You for the assurance that You will always keep Your promises, and that You will never leave us alone: so we don't need to fear. Help me to rest in Your peace today. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:8** *Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. (NIV)*

Today's verse is the strange anticlimax of Mark's Gospel. Many scholars consider that this is the last verse Mark wrote personally; as most of the early copies of the book end here. If that is so, why does Mark leave us in suspense, instead of soothing our minds with a 'happy ending'? Like every good novel (except Mark is definitely non-fiction!), this keeps the tension up to the end and beyond it. It is designed to make the readers ask themselves the key question, "Who is this Jesus?".

All the women had to hang onto, was the word of the angel recalling the words of Jesus. Yet fear still gripped them, and the inner surges of adrenaline drove them senseless from the tomb. But it should not have been like that! They should have responded in grateful amazement and been filled with joy. "Why can't they see that this is the happy ending?", we ask as the pages turn. And the careful reader will have come to the conclusion that eluded the women at that time - that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive - His word was fulfilled; and could be trusted by all who would believe it.

The same story comes just as fresh to us after 2000 years. The straightforward narrative of this Gospel should make us rethink who Jesus is. Those who see that his Word is always matched by His actions will want to put their trust in Him and not run away scared. Is that you? If so, you are ideally placed to challenge your colleagues to read the Gospel with the question, "Who do you think Jesus is?" If you are still wavering, why not ask the living Jesus to help you understand what Mark is saying in this book?

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. I know that however many signs and miracles I might see, in the end we all have to either take Jesus at His Word and be saved; or not and be lost from His Kingdom. Help me to trust Your word and put my faith in what you say and who You are ...and share the Gospel that has been written for the world. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:9-11** *When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.\* (NIV)*

This last section of Mark's Gospel ([16:9-20](#)), comments on the disciple's astonishing refusal to believe that Jesus was alive. It may not be from Mark's pen, but it underscores a major theme of the book - that even those who were closest to Jesus were blind to who He was, and to the evidence of the resurrection. Mary had much reason to be grateful to Jesus, and although she fled in fear from the empty tomb, she later encountered the Lord (cf [John 20:10-18](#)) and had a story to tell.

Their disbelief was not just a matter of conflicting evidence or a reaction to deep sorrow; it was an active refusal to trust the word of an eyewitness. Somehow, their absence of evidence was stronger than Mary's personal meeting with Jesus. Her clear story was a fairy tale, and her bright eyed certainly meant nothing to them. They were right and she was silly, misguided, hallucinating, wishful or just simply wrong. It went deeper still. Their hearts were not willing to receive truth.

This may help us to understand the blindness of our friends and colleagues who have not yet met the risen Christ. By themselves, our testimony of faith cannot make people believe: and even the authoritative words of Scripture can be refused. Still, we need to keep on explaining the truth (cf [Is 6:9-10](#)) to prepare the way for the Lord to meet them personally, as he did with us.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Help me to keep explaining who You are and how much You mean to me - even to those who refuse to believe. Please open their eyes, and help them to see, and to put their trust in You. For Your sake. Amen.*

\*The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20 (more info at [www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html))

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**W@W213**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 16:12-13** *Afterwards Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.\* (NIV)*

This reflects [Luke 24:13-35](#) in which Jesus appeared incognito to two loyal followers walking back home from Jerusalem on Resurrection Sunday. They described their hearts 'burning' ([Luke 24:32](#)) as He spoke the truth to them, but Luke says that they were kept from recognising Him ([Luke 24:16](#)). Despite this, they wanted to welcome Him into their home; and it was there, as He took charge at the meal table that their eyes were opened ([Luke 24:31](#)).

Although it was dark, they hurried back to the disciples in Jerusalem, but initially they were greeted with disbelief. Even when the Lord Jesus appeared to them all, they were shocked and faithless. How resistant they were, despite Jesus having explained about His resurrection well ahead of time. It shows the extraordinary potency of human hearts to block the very words that will bring life and hope.

The freedom to choose is built into human personality by design. The ability to voluntarily love and receive all that is good brings much joy. On the other hand, the stubborn refusal to embrace the truth and to submit to the God who made us, deprives us of so much blessing and leaves us in fear. Perhaps we need to audit our own responses to the Word of God: are they of faith or not?

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank you for Your Word which often tells me about things I cannot see or understand. Help me to embrace what is true and then expect you to show me how to work it out; to Your Glory, Amen.*

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**Read Mark 16:14** *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.\* (NIV)*

The story in [Luke 24:41-43](#) does not have the stern rebuke that is indicated here. However the fact was that the disciples were not believing, nor were their hearts filled with joy. The concept of 'refusal to believe' is a perhaps hard for us to deal with. "Maybe they were uninformed, confused or possibly too simple minded to grasp all that Jesus had said", we may think. Yet Jesus had often drawn their attention to their faithlessness.

Unbelief is a form of inner blindness. But it is more than just 'not getting it'; it involves an active decision not to trust the evidence that is available. They should have trusted Jesus' words and taken them at face value, but the disciples insisted on putting the spoken truth through the grid of their experience, and eliminating everything that was unfamiliar to them. Even when Jesus appeared after the resurrection, He chided Thomas's obstinacy (cf [John 20:24-29](#)) on the grounds that he ought to have believed the words Jesus had previously spoken. Indeed the Saviour pointed forwards to the time (these days) when the gospel would be a straightforward story - to be told and believed.

21st Century sceptics still demand the evidence while they refuse to believe the Word of God. But many 21st Century Christians have a similar problem: not that they do not believe (they must do or they would not be Christians), but they don't believe that others will believe the Gospel simply explained straight from the Bible. Somehow they think that the Word of God is an inadequate witness to Jesus, and needs to be bulked out with miracles or at least something physical, so that their eyes can see it. But the Gospel is designed for the eyes of the heart, and it is powerful, because the Holy Spirit gets behind the words and makes them power-filled. There is no problem with the ability of the Gospel to change lives; the problem lies with Christians who lack the confidence that it can and will!

**Prayer:** *Father God. Help me to believe that Your Word is still Your powerful tool to save people, and then to get on and tell them. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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### Word@Work from BeaconLight

**Read Mark 16:15-16** *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (NIV)\**

This passage echoes [Matthew 28:18-20](#); which we know as the Great Commission. It also reflects [John 3:18](#) which makes an infinite distinction between those who believe in the Lord Jesus and those who do not ... the former are saved but the latter are already condemned. That is why the Commission is so 'Great' - it has huge importance because those who do not respond to the Gospel message are already in the lap of hell. And it is only the Gospel that has the power to reveal Jesus as the Saviour who can 'rescue us from the coming wrath' (cf [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#)).

If Jesus had intended to save sinners without any participation from those who have already been saved, He would never have issued this call to go. Nor would He have been interested in risking the lives of martyrs, if their sacrifice had no benefit to His Kingdom. The fact remains that He did commission the disciples and through them, the church. His chosen method for the growth of the Kingdom is that ordinary Christians should tell what Christ has done for them, and urge others to believe in Him.

So, it is time to dispose of the old excuses which are based on the fear of what others may think (even if they are dressed up in more spiritual looking clothes), and accept our responsibility to tell of Christ wherever we go. If that were our first thought in the business day or the family weekend, then it will not be long before the opportunity comes to do it. All we have to do is to tell!

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank you for helping me to see that I have a responsibility to work with You in telling the Gospel. I know that none of my friends are 'sitting on the fence', but until they are saved they are already lost. Please help me to speak of Jesus today. In His Name. Amen.*

\*The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20 (more info at [www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html))

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## Word@Work from BeaconLight

**Read Mark 16:17-18** *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.*" (NIV)\*

Signs are not designed to be objects of wonder in their own right: their job is to point out the right way to go. They are not intended as museum pieces for admiration, but as obvious turning points to enable people to get on track. As the Gospel message spread, the book of the Acts tells of all sorts of miracles that drew attention to the uniquely powerful Jesus. In astonishing ways, while some apostles died as martyrs, others were preserved through multiple life threatening circumstances (cf [2 Corinthians 11:23-28](#)). Such signs were a part of God's commendation of Jesus (cf [Acts 2:22](#)) and of the apostles (cf [Acts 5:12](#)), to a sinful world.

Even those who denied the message could not ignore the miracles. [Hebrews 2:2-4](#) insists that the salvation-message has so many remarkable flags all around it, that missing it - is culpable negligence! *(For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.)*(NIV)

The Christian Way is not just a nice comfort for the sad, nor rules for the religious: it is packed with power! The gospel is the power of God for salvation; and the power to deal with demons. It does not rank alongside the multiple belief systems in our world: it is uniquely superior - as Jesus is superior to the angels (cf [Hebrews 1:4](#)). Many people do not have a clue that this is true; but all the evidence is in the Bible. Most will not open it by themselves, so why not invite a friend to read it with you? Mark's Gospel is a good place to start, and the [Word@Work archives](#) will help you with a verse by verse commentary!

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You that You have given us Your Word - to show the world what an amazing person You are, and how much Christ has done for us. Help me to defeat Satan's lies, by taking courage to ask my friends to read the Bible with me ... so that they can see how wonderful you are, and receive Your love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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### Word@Work from BeaconLight

**Read Mark 16:19-20** *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (NIV)\**

Although Mark probably did not pen the final 11 verses of the Gospel, this final summary bridges the gap between Jesus' life and the early church. The work of Jesus did not finish when He went back to heaven - it continues to this very day and will keep on into eternity. After Pentecost, the emboldened disciples could not be restrained from speaking about Jesus. As they preached, He worked with them.

What a transformation! From the frightened group of tough talking men huddled behind locked doors - to courageous messengers who could not be silenced. Yes, the miraculous signs drew the crowds; but it was the message of the Gospel which won the hearts. The same message also stirred up hatred and violent persecution. However, that did not stop the message, because the Lord was working with them - and they knew it!

Where is the Lord today? He is still with His people! If you belong to Him, then He is not only with you to provide emotional respite care or guidance in a crisis. He is with you as a senior colleague to enable you to work effectively alongside Him. Interestingly, He chooses weak and weary people for some of the hardest tasks; because working with Jesus provides its own extraordinary refreshment (cf. [Matthew 11:28-30](#)). The real Word at work, is Jesus working with you ... to help you to do what He says and share what is true. You are never alone. His presence is intended to enable great spiritual productivity ... for the blessing of all who will receive the Word, and the glory of our Saviour.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank You that You are always with me and wanting me to work with You each day. Help me to recognise the opportunities to live and speak for You; so that I will play the part You have asked of me ... and that I can trust You to do the wonderful transforming work - that comes as You are welcomed into people's lives. In Your Name. Amen.*

\*The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20 (more info at [www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html))

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This is the end of our studies in Mark's Gospel - but you can review previous Word@Work devotionals in Mark at <http://www.beaconlight.co.uk/email>.

**Tomorrow we start a new series in Ephesians! There is no need to sign up again, it will come to you automatically!!**

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