

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 16: 07-11

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Today, we will continue to read Mark Chapter 16, verse 7 to 11.

On the morning of Jesus' resurrection, several women, including Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother Mary, and John's mother Salome, came with spices to anoint Jesus' body. However, when they arrived at the empty tomb, they encountered an angel. This angel gave them the joyful news that Jesus had risen. All that remained in the place where Jesus had been laid were the linen cloths and the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The initial reaction of these women was one of fear, but as they heard the angel's message of joy, it's unclear how much they truly comprehended. At this point, the angel continued speaking to them.

Verse 7: "But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

The angel instructed these women to go and tell Jesus' disciples that He would precede them to Galilee and they would see Him there, just as He had told them before. Indeed, before Jesus' crucifixion, as they finished their last supper and headed to the Mount of Olives singing hymns, Jesus had already informed them. It's recorded in Mark 14:28, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." This was what Jesus had spoken to the disciples before His crucifixion: "After I die, I will rise again, and after rising, I will go to Galilee." Now, through this angel, He was conveying this message to these women, instructing them to tell Jesus' disciples, and Peter, that He would go ahead of them to Galilee, where they would meet Him. Thank the Lord, this is indeed a beautiful gospel message.

And this statement is also recorded in other Gospels. In the account in Mark's Gospel, the difference from the other Gospels lies in the two words "and Peter." "Tell His disciples", naturally includes Peter. So why specifically add "and Peter"? Why aren't these two words recorded in the other Gospels? What significance does "and Peter" hold? Through a message by Watchman Nee, we gain insight. Mark's Gospel was dictated by Peter and written by Mark. The other Gospel authors might not have been as meticulous or might not have heard this detail. But for Peter, these two words were the most important—not "and John," neither "and James," but "and Peter." Why? Because right after the Last Supper, when Jesus told them, "God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered," Peter was very confident. He said, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." But how did Jesus respond to him? "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And indeed, it happened later.

When Jesus was arrested and taken to the high priest's house, he saw his former teacher whom he respected, the one who could heal the sick and raise the dead, being insulted, spat upon, and beaten. Suddenly, he didn't know what to think. Just as Jesus predicted, he denied the Lord three times, the Lord whom he loved, the Lord he followed. So, when he heard the rooster crow twice, he went outside and wept bitterly. He thought his life of following the Lord was over. As a traitor who denied the Lord three times, would the Lord still want him? He felt great shame to serve the Lord again, embarrassed to be with the disciples. But Jesus resurrected; the resurrected Lord cared for and remembered this Peter who denied Him three times.

Therefore, He specifically instructed these women to go and tell Jesus' disciples, and Peter. It's as if He said to Peter, "Peter, I know you; I told you that you would deny Me three times; it's okay, I still love you. I allow you to experience such failure because it's through this failure that you'll truly know yourself. Do you remember what I told you, 'When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren after you have denied Me three times'? Now is the time, now that I am resurrected, it's time for you to return and strengthen your brethren." So "and Peter" may not be

remembered by Matthew, Luke, or John, but Peter will always remember it. He made sure Mark included it.

He is going to Galilee; you can tell His disciples and Peter to go to Galilee too. Thank the Lord, this is Peter's own experience, isn't it the same in our experience? How many times in our lives of following the Lord have we been unable to obey? How many times have we betrayed the Lord? Just as the Lord redeemed Peter, He also wants to redeem you and me. "And Peter" means you and me. Every failure, every fall, only serves to help us know ourselves better; we are inherently hopeless. Therefore, we won't have much confidence in ourselves, but we'll have more confidence in God's power, God's love, God's grace, and God's mercy.

Serving the Lord is not something we can do; it's something God can do. In Peter's experience, there are two aspects. First, through the phrase "and Peter," God wanted to restore Peter, who was completely disappointed in himself. This is the negative aspect: it eliminates Peter's natural assurance and self-confidence, helping him to let go of himself. After restoring Peter, God wanted to call Peter again. This is the second aspect, the positive aspect: to help Peter rise up to take on the responsibility God entrusted to him. And this positive aspect is recorded in John 21:15-19. According to the Chinese Union Version, after His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times by the Sea of Tiberias, "Do you love Me?" And Peter answered three times, saying, "Lord, You know that I love You." Peter dared not directly answer, "Yes, I love You," but added, "Lord, You know." Peter indeed no longer had such certainty about himself.

If you delve deeper into the details of the scripture, especially the Greek words used, you'll find that Jesus' three questions and the subsequent three encouragements contain deeper spiritual meanings. In the first two instances, the Lord asks, "Peter, do you love Me?" The word "love" in these questions is the Greek word "agapao." This love comes from God, it seeks nothing in return, has no conditions, and is everlasting. However, Peter felt inadequate, so he replied, "Lord, You know that I love You." The word Peter used in Greek is "phileo," which refers to a love between people. Peter was honest; he knew his love was unreliable. In

these two responses, Jesus encourages Peter: the first time, "Feed My lambs," and the second time, "Tend My sheep." Both of these tasks are within Peter's ability.

And Jesus asked Peter a third time, "Do you love me?" This time, Jesus used the word for love in Greek, "phileo." In other words, Jesus descended to the same level as Peter, asking, "Can you love me with the love of human love?" Hearing Jesus' question this time, Peter became distressed and answered, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Peter still used "phileo," but now, even in regard to his own affection, Peter lacked confidence. At this point, Jesus encouraged Peter, saying, "Feed My sheep." Perhaps this exceeded Peter's capacity and ability at the time, but because Peter lacked confidence in himself, this indicated that he could undertake this commission from God. Dear brothers and sisters, the lessons Peter learned is one we also need to learn. From the morning of Jesus' resurrection until Peter completed his journey in life, Peter faithfully carried out the trust God gave him. It's the same for us; may God help us.

Verse 8: "So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

These women hurriedly left the tomb because the events they had experienced were too unexpected. On the one hand, they trembled with fear, but on the other hand, they were astonished at the miraculous work of God. Initially, they may have been afraid to tell anyone, fearing disbelief. However, if we consider the other Gospels, they eventually obeyed the angel's command and told Jesus' eleven disciples.

At that time, the eleven disciples were likely living in two different places. Peter and John may have been together, perhaps with John staying in Jerusalem to comfort Peter. John's home was in Jerusalem, while the other nine disciples were together, perhaps in Bethany, a slightly more distant location. So, these women also split into two groups. Mary Magdalene went to see Peter and John, while the other sisters went to see the nine disciples.

Next, from verse 9 to verse 20, some scholarly researchers of scripture studies believe that these passages were added later because some ancient manuscripts do not contain these verses. However, personally, I believe that the process of determining the canon in history was also in God's hands, and since these verses have been preserved, it is by God's will. Therefore, I won't spend time discussing those scholarly debates and consider these verses as canonical. However, these passages are indeed very concise, and we need to refer to the other three Gospels to fully understand the whole picture of the events. In the following discussion, I will incorporate passages from the other three Gospels to help us understand how things unfolded.

Verse 9: "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons."

It's significant that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and the details are recorded in John 20:1-18. Mark specifically adds, "out of whom He had cast seven demons." This indicates that Mary Magdalene might have been confused or unable to comprehend the resurrection. She might not have understood the angel's announcement of Jesus' resurrection; all she knew was that Jesus' tomb was empty, and He was missing. So, she hurried to find Peter and John, as recorded in John 20:2, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." Consequently, Peter and John rushed to the tomb. John, being younger, arrived first but hesitated to enter, only stooping down to look in and seeing the linen cloths. Later, Peter entered without hesitation and saw the linen cloths lying by themselves, and the handkerchief that had been around His head not lying with the linen cloths but folded together in a place by itself. Then John entered, and they believed Mary Magdalene's report that Jesus was missing.

But at that time, John adds a special note in verse 9: "For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." So, while they believed Mary's statement that Jesus was missing, they hadn't yet realized that Jesus had risen. The two disciples then returned to their own homes. Peter and John could go

home since they saw Jesus was missing, but Mary couldn't. Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. Not understanding that Jesus had risen, she couldn't leave out of her love for the Lord. Mary Magdalene might have been unclear about the truth, but her love for the Lord was genuine. This contrasts with Mary of Bethany, who understood the truth and knew Jesus would rise, so she didn't go to the tomb.

Let's see how the Lord responds to this sister who loves Him deeply but lacks clarity in understanding. The Lord first sends messengers to comfort Mary, but she refuses to be comforted. This compels Jesus to personally appear to her. Initially not recognizing Jesus and thinking Him to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Mary was focused on finding Jesus' body, not realizing her physical limitations as a frail woman or considering the distance and need for transportation. This sincere sister's love for the Lord compels Jesus to reveal Himself to her. Jesus called her name, "Mary," a familiar sound to her, and immediately she recognized Him. She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning Teacher.

Then Jesus said something very important to Mary. In John 20:17, because of this statement, we must thank Mary because her love for Jesus compelled Him to appear to her and speak to her. This statement contains some very important truths, and if it weren't for Mary, we might have missed them. Let's read John 20:17, "Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" Firstly, Jesus' first words were "Do not cling to Me," which is significant. The just-resurrected Jesus couldn't be touched. Why? Because He had to ascend secretly to the Father first. Jesus was like the first fruits, like the first ripe crop, which must be presented to the Father. Before that, Jesus shouldn't have had any physical contact with anyone, but Mary's love compelled Him to appear to her. Therefore, Jesus first said, "Do not cling to Me."

Then, He said to Mary, "go to My brethren," which is the first time Jesus refers to His disciples as brethren in the Gospels. Because in His resurrection, a new and great birth has taken place. In this new creation, the relationship between Jesus and His disciples becomes one of brethren. Here, Jesus instructs Mary to tell His

brethren, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." It's clear here that Jesus is going to have a secret ascension, different from the public ascension forty days later, recorded in Acts 1:9-11. There was a forty-day period between these two ascensions. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples many times, helping them transition from His physical presence to His spiritual presence. Jesus wanted Mary to tell His brethren that He was going up to see His Father, who is also their Father. At this point, Mary understood, and she went and told Jesus' disciples as He instructed.

Verses 10 and 11: "She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe."

Mary obeyed Jesus' command and went to find Jesus' disciples, telling them that Jesus had risen and appeared to her personally. However, the disciples remained in mourning, still grieving. They did not believe that Jesus had risen, nor did they believe Mary's testimony. It seems that the Gospel of Mark particularly emphasizes the disbelief of the disciples. Perhaps this is Peter's confession. Dear brothers and sisters, we should appreciate Peter's honesty. How often do we find ourselves in the same state of unbelief? But God has abundant grace; He could restore Peter through "and Peter," and He could make an exception to appear to Mary. Similarly, He can help us according to our needs in our circumstances.

Let's pray: Lord, we thank You that You not only died for us, removing the barrier between us and our Father God, but You also rose again after three days. Resurrection, beyond human understanding, yet something we can actually experience. Help us to experience Your resurrection power in every situation we face each day. May this power of resurrection lead us beyond our circumstances. Lord, we acknowledge that if we remain on earth, there are indeed many challenges. But if we have Your heavenly transcendence, what are earthly matters to us? Just as You helped Peter and Mary on the morning of Your resurrection, we pray that You would also help us today: to overcome the things that disturb us, to

surpass the environments we cannot conquer, so that we may likewise experience the power of resurrection and the transcendence of ascension. Bless my life today, I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.