Stunned and Amazed

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. I went back and looked about a week ago, and today as we end the Gospel of Mark will be our 97th sermon on Mark.

It started March 27th. It's an average of seven verses per sermon through these 16 chapters. And interestingly enough, if you're familiar with the Gospel of Mark, or as I've mentioned in the last month or so, you may have kind of looked in your Bible to see, the end of Mark is one of the most difficult passages for expositors to handle.
If you look in your Bible, for most of you, you'll have a note after verse 8 that says something like, the earliest manuscripts do not include verses 9 to 20.
Most of our English translations will have that note. There's an exception to that, but most of them will have that note. This text and the text at the end of John 7, going through chapter 8, 1 through 11, with the woman caught in adultery, are the two passages that would be the most difficult for expositors to know what to do with, because they're not in the earliest manuscripts.
I met with a couple of our pastors about a month ago and just said, you know, here's where we're coming in Mark 16, and to get their thoughts on how we should handle this.
[1:42] And everyone's thought, you've got three options. One is you just end the study at chapter 16, verse 8, which is what most Bible teachers do.

Another option is just to teach verses 9 to 20. And there are men that I greatly respect and very much have benefited from listening to their preaching of the years that teach verses 9 to 20.
The third option is to just kind of deal in some way with why verses 9 to 20 in our English translations are in brackets, and why it's a question, and what that means, and then what would we do with that.
And so at the recommendation of those men that I sought counsel with on this, that's the way that we're going to handle the end of chapter 16. Now what you need to know is there are good people, good teachers, who will disagree with this.
In fact, I was even going through a bunch of notes and different things I found even just yesterday on this. There's a pretty lengthy book that you can buy.
[3:00] Four authors, I believe, three or four authors contributed to it. And the entire book, the whole book, is just on what to do with chapter 16, 9 to 20.

Now I'm going to save you a few bucks, all right? You don't need to go buy it. But I just want you to know, it's that widespread of discussion and conversation.
The book has contributions from some very gifted scholars, who even among themselves have some level of disagreement of what we would do with verses 9 to 20.
The fact that we have so many manuscripts, so many pieces of copies of the original that we know what they say, allows us in our English text to have incredible confidence with the Bible that we have.
There are a number of exposures who have dealt with verses 9 to 20. I think most of us that land where I land probably handle this text similarly.
[4:19] It's not that what I'm saying today is unique. I think other guys who fall where I fall, probably their sermons are similar to this, because the issue relates to what we know about manuscripts, what we know about how the Bible is put together.

So there's not a lot of variety, really, in how you can deal with that other than just explain the situation, which is what I want to try to do for you today.
When you compare the Bible with any other ancient text, the astounding amount of manuscripts and fragments we have is nearly unbelievable.

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Let me just read you a few facts and quotes on this. One man said it this way, Most historians have little trouble accepting the accuracy of Homer's Iliad, and we have only 643 copies of his work today.
By comparison, New Testament manuscripts boast nearly 5,900 and approximately 25,000 manuscripts that exist in Latin and other languages.
[5:40] Another historian said, There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.

Another theologian, The New Testament is the best attested book in ancient history, both in terms of the number of manuscripts and nearness of those manuscripts to the date of the original, and one who specializes in what we would call textual criticism, says, On the basis of manuscript evidence, we can say that we have a thousand times more evidence that Jesus Christ existed than we do that Alexander the Great existed.
What these manuscripts allow us to do is to go back and you can put them together and you can compare. So the Bible, of course, is not written in English.
It's written in Hebrew and Greek, a little bit of Aramaic. And then it is copied and passed down. You don't have the printing press until 1440.
And so things were copied. And what we have by God's grace is this incredible amount of manuscripts and fragments that have been found and discovered.
[7:06] And when you put them all together and compare, it's very easy to see what is supposed to be there. So the more you study the Bible, the more you study how the Bible was preserved, and the more you understand manuscript evidence, the more confidence we have in the Bible that we hold.

In fact, because of textual criticism, that doesn't mean it's critical of the sermon, of the biblical text. It's the science of how you look at manuscripts and fragments and put them together.
We know exactly in our English translations where there would be any questions whatsoever. And textual criticism lets us know that 99% of our biblical text in English is without any question or dispute whatsoever.
And of the few places where there is any question of any kind, nearly all of those questions deal with either the spelling of the word or the order of a word.
And because of the Holy Spirit's grace in not only inspiring the Scripture, but in preserving the Scripture that we could have with confidence to know what we hold is the word of God, we even have the gift of being able to mark in our English translations the precise places where there would be any question at all.
[8:43] It's not hidden. It's not veiled. Nearly all of you in the Bible you hold in your lap have a note that lets us know that the ending of Mark is one such place of just a few where textual criticism tells us there is a difference between the earliest manuscripts.

So, what I want to do this morning is walk you through how we handle and should feel about the ending of Mark and then I hope bring us to a place where we understand with clarity what the Holy Spirit was using Mark to do for us.
Let's just look at a few questions. Number one, why is this passage in question? Why is verses 9 to 20 in question? Well, here's what we know.
There are many ancient manuscripts that do contain verses 9 to 20. However, the oldest manuscripts and the most significant manuscripts do not have verses 9 to 20.
It ends with chapter 16, verse 8. Further, though a majority of manuscripts do have verses 9 to 20, of those that do, most of those come 11th century or later.
[10:22] The earliest manuscripts and most reliable end Mark's Gospel in verse 8. Anyone who writes on this topic or who teaches on this topic is going to bring up this important part that the two oldest manuscripts that we have go back to the mid-300s in full.

They're called a codex. A codex because it's bound as opposed to being a scroll. You have the codex Sinaticus, which has the entire New Testament.
You have the codex Vaticanus, which has the entire Bible. Those are our two most reliable, oldest, and most important manuscripts.
They do not include verses 9 to 20. Further, the vocabulary and the writing style of verses 9 to 20 are quite different from the rest of the entire Gospel of Mark.

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It was last night about 10.30 and I was going over a few things in my office at home and I noticed there on my desk at home, I've got four study Bibles.
[11:46] Really trusted study Bibles. And I thought to myself, you know, I'm preaching on this in the morning. I ought to do like one last consultation and make sure I've not messed this up.

So I got the four. I haven't looked through them yet. So I was a little apprehensive to even open them. The ESV study Bible has the notes similar to what I've just given you and tells the reader that they should read verses 9 to 20 with great caution.
The Grace and Truth Study Bible in the New American Standard and the NIV says these verses are probably not original to the author when he wrote his Gospel.
Mark 16.8 is where Mark's Gospel comes to an end. The Legacy Standard Translation in the MacArthur Study Bible says, The external evidence strongly suggests these verses were not originally part of Mark's Gospel.
While the majority of Greek manuscripts contain these verses, the earliest and most reliable do not.
And the Reformation Study Bible edited by R.C. Sproul says, When all the evidence is taken into consideration, however, it appears most likely that the Gospel of Mark originally concluded at verse 8.
[13:03] So, if nothing else, I'm in really good company. Alright? The question becomes, then, what is the issue?

And the issue, as I mentioned a moment ago, is simply this, that we have more manuscripts and fragments of the Scripture than of any other work in antiquity.
And it's not even close. And you put all those pieces together and what you see are that our oldest, most reliable manuscripts do not have verses 9 to 20.
And of the ones that do have verses 9 to 20, most all of those are quite more recent. 11th century or more recent.
Now, the next question, then, is what does this passage say? What's in verses 9 to 20? And nearly all of what's in here is found in other parts of the Gospels.
[14:08] There is one verse that has some question and debate about even what it should mean or how it would be understood, but the rest of it is pretty similar to what you find in other Gospels.

It has the appearance to Mary Magdalene in verses 9 to 11. Very similar to what we read in John 20. It's got the appearance of the two travelers in verses 12 to 13, similar to Luke 24.
It's got the Great Commission in verses 15 and 18, similar to what we read in Matthew 28, in addition to John 3, Acts 2. You do have this bit of strange thing in verse 18 that says, they will pick up serpents with their hands and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.
They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover. And there are some who have very foolishly taken that to believe that is some kind of a command or protection for everybody that you could pick up snakes and handle them or drink poison and no believer would ever die.
I want to encourage you to understand that's not what this means and if any of you were to test me on that, you would lose. Now, what we do know is that it is true in the New Testament, in Acts 28, that this happens in some extent to the Apostle Paul and he is able to overcome and survive that.
[15:47] Now, that's essential because the Holy Spirit is going to use the Apostle Paul to author much of our New Testament. And so, it becomes essential that his life would be spared.

And so, even some of what we see in verse 18, we see come to fruition in the life of Paul in Acts 28.
And then at the end, verses 19 and 20, it deals with the ascension and ongoing ministry of the Apostles, much like we read about in Luke 24.
That's what the passage says. A third question is, is Mark's gospel incomplete without it?
One of the arguments against ending the gospel of Mark in verse 8 is that it ends very abruptly. One of my favorite Bible teachers who I trust completely and I think does an excellent job, he teaches, when he taught through Mark, he preached verses 9 to 20 and accepts them as part of Mark's original.
So, I don't want you to think that there's not differing opinions. There are, and even among men that I greatly esteem. But one of the arguments is that if you end in chapter 16, verse 8, that it ends too abruptly.
[17:13] It's just incomplete. Remember, chapter 16 is the account of the resurrection. So, let's go back up to verse 6. And he said to them, Do not be alarmed.

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You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee and there you will see him just as he told you.
And they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had seized them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. And it seems to many that that is just too abrupt and strange of an ending.
Let me just caution you on one simple thing. Don't think, well, if it ends in verse 8, that makes chapter 16 really short and therefore we know that something is missing.
Remember, when the Bible is written, it's not written in chapters and verses. That happens much, much later. So, it's not as though Mark would understand if you said, how come chapter 16 was so short?
[18:26] Mark didn't divide it into chapters. That happens much later. But I would argue as many others do that there are a few things that we know about the Gospel of Mark and for our congregation I've spent so many Sundays in the Gospel of Mark.

There are some things I think that we can see how this actually does fit his writing style. One is, I would just give you that word, style. What's the style of how Mark has written this Gospel?
Well, Mark doesn't start like Matthew and Luke do with the birth of Jesus and Mark doesn't start like John does in the Gospel of John in the eternity past.
Mark gets right out of the gate. Jesus is 30 years old. This fits his style. Mark's writing style is short, abbreviated, bullet point, just the facts, not many unnecessary details.
in addition, if you were just to sit down today and just read the Gospel of Mark in its entirety, the word that would jump out to you for sure would be the word immediately.
[19:44] That's just the transition word he uses over and over again. This happened and immediately this, and immediately this, and immediately this. His style is to get right to the point, say what needs to be said, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, give the important theological part, and then move on to something else.

A second word I would give you is the word summary. What's the summary of what Mark, through the work of the Holy Spirit, intends his readers to walk away with?
Well, Mark often speaks of the fear that people are gripped with when they encounter Jesus. In fact, this is a pretty common thing that pastors or Bible teachers or scholars or authors will do when they're looking through these issues is to notice how chapter 16, verse 8 ends by saying they were afraid and to show that this is not a strange way to end this.
This actually is in keeping with the summary of the entirety of the gospel. We can look at a number of examples. I want to give you just a few, just a very few. So go back to chapter 1 with me if you would for just a moment.
Mark chapter 1. Now I just want you to notice how it's Mark's style to summarize an event by showing that people were left in wonder, in astonishment, in amazement, in fear of the Lord.
[21:30] Chapter 1, verse 22, and they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes.

The summary of his teaching was they were left in astonishment. Go to chapter 4. look at the very last verse in chapter 4 when Jesus calms the storm, verse 41.
And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?
Chapter 5, verse 33. 3. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.
Chapter 9, verse 6. It's the time of the transfiguration.
[22:45] for he did not know what to say for they were terrified. Chapter 10, verse 32.

And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem and Jesus walking ahead of them and they were amazed and those who followed were afraid.
And then just for time, just jump back to chapter 16. Verse 5, we're at the empty tomb and entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed.
And then of course verse 8, they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had seized them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

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This summary is actually quite consistent with the style of Mark's writing. One of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tends to give you the quick statement and summary and then it shows how people are left in astonishment, in amazement, in wonder, in fear, in awe of the Lord.
[24:14] And then a third word I would give you is the word strategy. The strategy of Mark is to present Christ as king and as the only way to heaven. He clearly doesn't try to give every single detail.

In fact, in most cases, he gives the fewest amounts of detail of the other gospel writers because his strategy is simply to show Christ as savior and leave you in wonder at who he is and amazed at what he has done.
In fact, as many Bible teachers have pointed out, the very first verse, Mark 1, 1, says simply the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God.
He starts right with the meat. This is the gospel. This is the point. This is the message that Christ is king.
And in chapter 15, there toward the end, in verse 39, we see the picture of the centurion who stood facing him, saw that in this way he had breathed his last and he said truly this man was the son of God.
[25:31] Mark begins his gospel by saying this is the gospel. And at the very end declares even from one who watched and participated in the execution of Jesus, this man is the son of God.

Mark tells you in chapter 1, verse 1, what the purpose is, what the strategy is, and by chapter 15, the crucifixion has demonstrated that to be the case.
which leads to a fourth question. If verse 8 is likely the end of the original text, a couple of things, where does this leave us?
Well, one question would be then, what is verses 9 to 20? I think probably like John 7 53 through 8 11, probably something that's added later to the text, is verses 9 through 20 true?
I think so, because it comes from other parts of the gospel. Probably, in my opinion, not original to Mark's authorship. And again, that doesn't leave us with questions about our Bible.
[26:45] It actually gives us even more confidence that we have so many manuscripts and so many fragments that we have together that we can lay them out and compare that even in English we can know exactly where there's any question or discussion at all.

So, where does it leave us? If the original ending of Mark 16, by the way, there's four, I think four, three or four different endings that can be found at the end of Mark 16.
If verse 8 is the true ending of the gospel of Mark, where are we left? Well, here's what we know.
We know that Jesus said he was going to be delivered, die, and be raised to life.
We know in Mark 10, 45, Jesus had said that he's going to give his life as a ransom for many. For that to be true, he has to die in our place and must conquer the grave.
And it's all happened. Mark has detailed to us how he was delivered, how Christ was crucified, that Christ was buried, that he paid the price for our sin, that he is our redeemer, and that by God's grace, praise the Lord, the tomb is empty.
[28:19] we need to know that he's risen. We need to know that he really is the king of kings. We need to know that the believers who trusted in him, that their confidence was right and well placed.

And when you come to chapter 16, verse 8, there is no question that the tomb is empty, and Jesus is the savior of all who believe.
And if verse 8 is the actual ending of Mark, what about the condition of the people that we find?
Again, to verse 8, they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.
Notice the four ways that the people are described. One is with the word trembling. Their bodies are shaking. Two, they were astonished.
[29:30] Their minds were amazed. Three, they were silent. They were too stunned to speak.

And four, they were afraid. fear grips Fear grips them based on the amazing truth, revelation, and glory they have beheld.
Just like happened when he healed, just like happened at the transfiguration. This is exactly how Mark presents those who encounter the living Christ. They're left trembling, stunned, silent, and shaking.
The glory of God has so gripped their hearts that they are in stunned silence.

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You know what our culture doesn't handle very well? Silence. We do everything we can to fill all gaps with something.
[30:54] People don't like to sit in silence. They don't like to be forced to think or meditate or contemplate. They just want to move on to something else.

People struggle if they're sitting by themselves and they can't fill the gap with something. In fact, it's almost just beyond comprehension that just 25 years ago, if you went on a road trip as a child, you played the alphabet game by looking at road signs or the license play game or Mad Libs.
no DVDs, no iPads, no phones. And you think back and say, well, how did you fill the time?
Well, you just kind of sat there and did what? You did nothing. You go to the gym today and somebody finishes a set and the first thing they do while they're lifting weights is get out their phone to scroll lest they have 60 seconds of their mind not being occupied.
It's all around us. In a culture that just doesn't understand the value of silence and meditation, it seems a bit strange, but here's the reality of how Mark, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, leaves the people at the empty tomb.
[32:42] They are in stunned. Silence. And there is something very fitting about that. They won't stay in stunned silence forever.

Soon enough, they're going to go preach the gospel of the empty tomb and they're going to turn the world upside down. But before they do, they're stunned.
And I would say to you that if there's something that needs recovered in our day, it's the feeling of being stunned, of just being amazed.
I'll never forget being, we've had a couple of occasions to be on the Sea of Galilee with people from our church, and we've sung songs together there, and I've taught from Matthew 14 while we're on the boat in the Sea of Galilee.
as breathtaking as that was, my favorite part was when we're on the boat just sitting in silence.
[34:11] At all these sites and places we go to that the Bible says are there, you take your Bible, you open it up, and the Bible says this happened there, you can look right there with your eyes, is this there or not? And at those sites, I've had the privilege to teach and preach from God's word, and we've had guides who have helped us to understand the history and the archaeology, but part of my favorite memories of being in these biblical sites in Israel is just looking at these spots.

Some things that the Bible said were there that people for decades and even centuries didn't even know they were there until they were discovered. Some, even in the last few years, that have been on earth that are exactly how the Bible described them, that for centuries was a mystery.
And given enough time, you just see over and over and over, God's word is true. And there's something fitting about just being stunned for a moment, just being amazed.
There's something fitting when you do a wedding and the groom is standing beside you and the door is open in the back and that bride makes her first appearance and that groom sees her.
What does everyone in the congregation do in that moment? every head looks at the groom to see what his face looks like when he sees the bride. And you don't give him a microphone because it's not time to speak yet.
[36:04] Soon enough he will. He'll exchange their vows and exchange their rings, but for a moment it's just stunned silence at the beauty that he beholds.

Think of all that Mark has told us. Mark has walked us through this final week in the life of Jesus where he rides in triumphantly where he goes to the temple and observes all that is going on and sees how the father's house, which was to be a house of prayer, has been turned into a den of thieves.
He goes back to that place and puts that to a stop. He spends an entire day just fielding questions and people are trying to set traps for him that he doesn't step in a single one of them but with authority and amazing precision he calls them out exactly on their error and speaks with a power and a passion and an authority unlike this world has ever seen even so much that when Pilate pulls him back to the secret place and says don't you know I have the authority to save your life or to take your life Jesus says don't you understand you have no authority unless it's been granted to you by my father.
if there's one thing that's clear at the crucifixion of Jesus it's that people needed to behold who he was to consider his message his mission his miracles and in a culture where people don't like to think they just want to feel something there's danger because you need to just in stunned silence

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consider that you are a sinner deserving of judgment but God being rich in mercy gave his son to die in our place that all who would believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life and every one of you who are a child of
God born again Christian every one of us deserved judgment instead have been given grace called his own welcomed at his table and have the assurance that one second after you die you will be with him just be in stunned silence for a moment about that truth you don't need an illustration you don't need yelling and screaming you don't need a song just be stunned by the wonder that we who are children of wrath by grace are called the children of God so I think chapter 16 verse 8 ends right where it should end stunned by the gospel amazed by the empty tomb
[40:27] I think the emotion of mark 16 8 is summed up beautifully by the hymn Charles Wesley wrote in the 1700s one of my favorites finish then thy new creation pure and spotless let us be let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee changed from glory into glory till in heaven we take our place until we cast our crowns before thee lost in wonder love and praise so may it be said of us that as we think of the sacrifice of Jesus and consider the reality of the empty tomb and ponder the completeness of our salvation found in the finished work of

Jesus Christ that we too would be lost in wonder love and praise and we give thanks to the Lord for the teaching his lessons and the astounding truth that we have learned these two and a half years word by word to the gospel according to Mark Lord it is with grateful hearts amazed at your love and your grace that we bow our heads and close our eyes in an act of humility and stunned silence we approach your throne boldly only because of the work of Jesus who died for us who took our sin upon himself who absorbed your wrath upon him as a payment for our sin who has given to us his righteousness and placed it into our account so that you our father would see us as you see your son and as we consider the truth that we can find salvation in the name of
Jesus and no other we know that we're called to declare it and we want to preach it and we want to sing it and we want to teach it we want to use our voices to speak forth the gospel but first before we speak before we sing before we play first may we ponder and in stunned silence consider the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that you are holy we are sinful Christ died for us and that all who call upon the name of the
Lord will be saved as we consider the gospel we too this day are lost in wonder love and praise to the glory of Christ we pray amen love you church thank you for being here this morning god bless and happy new year you're dismissed for not or not or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or or

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