

Whom Do You Believe? Saturday within the Octave of Easter April 27, 2019 Acts 4:13-21; **Mk 16:9-15** (The point is that we are responsible for what we believe; it's a free choice and we are responsible for the consequences.)

“But later, as the Eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised.”

Now this is part of the Gospel of Mark in modern Bibles, but many scholars believe it is **not originally part of the Gospel of Mark**, that **Mark simply ended with the empty tomb**, which is a very powerful way to end. **That gives the listener or the reader the responsibility of figuring out what is this all about.**

Now of course the Gospel of Mark takes place within the context of the early Church, and the early Church only existed because of the resurrection. **There would have been no Church without the resurrection.** The disciples would have simply melted away back into the woodwork. But according to what modern historians believe reading Mark's Gospel, which is the shortest of the four gospels, **various people were unhappy with the abrupt ending and they thought, well, let's add a few paragraphs and what they added of course is found in other gospels;** so they didn't make it up; it was already around, stories not told in exactly the same way. For example Luke tells of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Here Mark says, “After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking on their way to the country.” So he doesn't mention Emmaus. He doesn't mention the whole story, but he mentions that this happened. And by Mark I mean the editors of Mark's Gospel.

But **the point that they make in each case is the unbelief.** And this mirrors the story of doubting Thomas. But according to this particular version, all the disciples were doubting Thomases, not just Thomas. He is selected in the Fourth Gospel as an example, but really,

according to this, they all were doubtful. Mary Magdalene came and told them; they didn't believe it. These other disciples came and told them; they didn't believe it, and so on. And what is at the base of this is observing that faith is a choice—**faith is a choice**. We choose whom to believe.

That's true not only in regard to spiritual matters, it's true for everything. In every area we are choosing whom we believe.

Now the resurrection of Jesus is par excellence the divine revelation, the self-disclosure of God and God's love and God's life and God's eternal plan for human destiny. And so to choose to believe it is actually what we would call a supernatural act of faith. And of course it is the response to divine grace, which we believe is offered to everyone sooner or later. But in every other area of life also, we choose whom we believe. There are alternate explanations for everything. Whom do we choose to believe? **The point is that we are responsible for what we believe; it's a free choice and we are responsible for the consequences.**

Now we can make mistakes. We can believe someone who is not trustworthy. **But even if we are completely sincere in believing someone who is not trustworthy, we still have to bear with the consequences of believing something that's false.** So this is a very serious business, first and foremost in regard to God, but also in regard to everything else, in regard to people, in regard to politics, in regard to economics, in regard to public affairs, in regard to family matters. **Whom do you believe and why? How do you choose? What is the criteria you use to decide who is trustworthy?** That is the sort of question that Mark is raising, or at least this editor of Mark is raising, in this particular section.