

1 16, one through eight. When the  
2 sap was passed, Mary Magdalene,  
3 Mary the mother of James, and Salome  
4 bought spices so that they might go and  
5 anoint him. And very early on the first  
6 day of the week, when the sun had risen,  
7 they went to the tomb, and they were  
8 saying to one another, Who will roll  
9 away the stone for us from the entrance  
10 of the tomb? And looking up, they  
11 saw that the stone had been rolled back.  
12 It was very large. And entering the  
13 tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the  
14 right side, dressed in a white robe, and  
15 they were alarmed. And he said to them,  
16 Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus  
17 of Nazareth, who was crucified.  
18 He has risen. He is not  
19 here. See the place where they laid him.  
20 But go, tell his disciples and Peter  
21 that he is going before you to Galilee.  
22 There you will see him, just as he told  
23 you. And they went out and  
24 fled from the tomb, for trembling and  
25 astonishment had seized them, and they  
26 said nothing to anyone, for they were  
27 afraid. Let's pray.  
28 Lord God, I pray that you would  
29 make the meditations of all of our hearts  
30 and the words of my mouth pleasing to  
31 you. Lord, help us to hear something  
32 today, on this Easter Sunday. that's  
33 important to us, that makes a difference  
34 to us, that helps us to  
35 live our lives well.  
36 We pray this in your name and for your  
37 sake. Amen. Well,  
38 most scholars believe, Bible  
39 scholars, I think most serious Bible  
40 scholars believe. You know, people say  
41 that all the time. How would you know,  
42 really most do or most don't? But I've  
43 heard and I've read that most  
44 scholars believe that what I just read  
45 for you is the end  
46 of the original Gospel of  
47 Matthew. Now, if you look in your Bibles,  
48 you can grab the ones under your chairs,  
49 and I'm sure it's true of those. If you  
50 look in your Bibles, you see more verses,  
51 verses nine through 20. But  
52 almost all serious Bible  
53 scholars believe that those verses were  
54 added later. Borrowing from the book of  
55 Acts, borrowing from other places,  
56 for a bunch of reasons that I'm not going  
57 to bore you with now, but if you want to  
58 come, we'll have a class in Mark and  
59 he'll tell you all about it. But that  
60 that those were added in later. It  
61 doesn't mean that those verses aren't  
62 good, that they're not helpful, just that  
63 the original version that we have of the  
64 Gospel of Mark ended at verse 8.  
65 Now, if you were listening, you might  
66 think that that might be a bit  
67 problematic, right? Where did it  
68 end? They're afraid,  
69 they fled, and they didn't say anything

70 to anybody. The end.  
71 It's kind of anticlimactic after the  
72 whole story of Jesus, his life, his  
73 teaching, his death, and now  
74 his resurrection. As we've been preparing  
75 for Easter here at Covenant, we've been  
76 doing so using the theme Behold the Man.  
77 And over the last several weeks, in our  
78 messages, getting ready for Easter, we've  
79 been offering pictures of Jesus, pictures  
80 that have been offered by me and by other  
81 great preachers in our church  
82 congregation here. As we've looked at  
83 Jesus, as we've prepared for Easter all  
84 over the place this year here at Covenant,  
85 ohh You could hardly escape seeing this  
86 painting by Antonio Cesare,  
87 1871, which is entitled Ecce  
88 Homo, which means Behold the Man,  
89 and then other Behold the Man pictures  
90 that we've been using all along, this  
91 theme of Behold the Man. Well, we're  
92 continuing this theme today, on  
93 Easter. We're concluding this theme  
94 today. And this  
95 embarrassing ending of the Gospel of  
96 Mark actually works quite  
97 well for us, I think. The  
98 ending includes us in the  
99 story. Why are we reading  
100 this gospel? How did the  
101 church come about?  
102 Something must have happened after the  
103 end of Mark's story, at least what most  
104 people think is the authentic end of  
105 Mark's story. The story of Jesus must  
106 not have ended with the women's  
107 debilitating fear and resulting  
108 silence. People did, in  
109 fact, behold the man,  
110 Jesus, as the one risen from the  
111 dead. Are we not part  
112 of this continuing story of Jesus  
113 today? What is your  
114 worldview? What broad  
115 assumptions help you make sense of  
116 what you see and experience?  
117 What grand story of reality  
118 informs your understanding of life?  
119 Everybody has one, maybe several  
120 competing. More importantly,  
121 what is your view when you  
122 behold the man who is  
123 Jesus? At the original end of Mark's  
124 gospel, those who first see that Jesus is  
125 risen cannot get their minds  
126 and hearts wrapped around it.  
127 Their view of Jesus is entirely  
128 inadequate, and so their  
129 worldview, their understanding of  
130 reality is deeply flawed as well.  
131 The women, we are told, went to the tomb  
132 to anoint a dead body. That's  
133 what spices that they bought are for.  
134 They were sad, to be sure, and they had  
135 concerns, like getting the big  
136 tomb sealing stone out of the way.  
137 But this was normal life stuff. They  
138 knew how to be sad. They knew what

139 to do with dead bodies. They  
140 were ready, willing, and  
141 able to do what needed to be  
142 done. Then things got  
143 weird. The stone was  
144 already rolled back. An angel appeared  
145 telling them that what Jesus had  
146 predicted had actually happened, he is  
147 risen. The angel also told them  
148 not to be alarmed. Yeah,  
149 that advice didn't work out so well.  
150 The angel tells them to go tell his  
151 disciples the good news, and they  
152 don't. They can't,  
153 not at first. Fear  
154 and astonishment debilitated them.  
155 They knew how to take care of dead  
156 bodies. They didn't know how to deal  
157 with a body raised back to life.  
158 Though Jesus had told them this was going  
159 to happen, they were not ready.  
160 They didn't know what willing meant in  
161 this new world that had exploded into  
162 being in their sight. They were not  
163 able to follow what God was telling them  
164 to do. Not until their view of  
165 Jesus, and so their  
166 worldview, was radically  
167 altered. And thus,  
168 Mark's gospel comes to an end.  
169 R. Alan Cole in his commentary on Mark  
170 says this, Here was love and deep  
171 devotion, but it was only an adoration of  
172 a dead Christ, and that was not yet  
173 true Christian faith. The women look  
174 for the familiar love figure of the past,  
175 so the first result of the resurrection  
176 message was only the fear produced in  
177 them by the news of this new divine  
178 Christ. A proper  
179 view of reality depends upon a  
180 proper view of Jesus. And  
181 this must be the radically difficult  
182 post-resurrection view that  
183 releases fleshly hindrances  
184 to embrace new and everlasting life  
185 in his eternal kingdom.  
186 This original, anti-climactic,  
187 even embarrassing ending of Mark's gospel  
188 makes it abundantly clear that it  
189 is the kingdom of God  
190 we are talking about. It is the kingdom  
191 of God that we find breaking  
192 into the world, coming alive, awakening  
193 in world history.  
194 Not -- listen carefully  
195 -- not the kingdom of people  
196 believing in God. Not  
197 the kingdom of people doing what they  
198 perceive God wants them to do.  
199 Here is a common error among  
200 Christians and in churches. We  
201 make the mistake of making things  
202 about ourselves. What  
203 we believe, how firmly we  
204 believe it, how well we are  
205 obeying God, how well we  
206 avoid sin, how we  
207 worship God here better than they

208 do over there.  
209 This is a very natural inclination.  
210 It takes us right back to the Garden of  
211 Eden, where our oldest ancestors  
212 believed the lie that they could be like  
213 God, that anything and everything could  
214 be ultimately about them.  
215 It's the lie that drives much of our  
216 culture today. We  
217 naturally, naturally  
218 prefer the kingdom of  
219 people believing in God, to  
220 the kingdom of God.  
221 It's a man-centered kingdom in a churchy  
222 sort of way. In the kingdom of  
223 people believing in God, God doesn't  
224 even have to be real. People just  
225 need to believe God is real,  
226 or at least pretend to believe it.  
227 Let's be honest. Such a kingdom can  
228 provide some benefits. It can help people  
229 sleep at night, motivate people to do  
230 nice things rather than mean things,  
231 etc. But in the end,  
232 if we find ourselves anywhere at all, if  
233 we come to our senses, if we stop  
234 and think soberly about things,  
235 which is very difficult for us,  
236 we will find ourselves having been duped  
237 by a happy lie.  
238 We might be able to sleep better at  
239 night, but we will have no  
240 answer for or weapon  
241 against the final victory of  
242 death and destruction.  
243 Many of you know I almost died of a heart  
244 attack several years ago. Why  
245 didn't I? Well, I believe, in  
246 part, so I could be here today and to  
247 tell you this. What  
248 awakened in the world and what awakens in  
249 people still today is not the kingdom  
250 of people believing in God,  
251 which would have been no help to me if my  
252 heart attack had ended my life back  
253 then, it is the kingdom  
254 of God, which is all the  
255 help I and you will ever need in life  
256 and in death. The short,  
257 authentic ending of Mark's gospel, praise  
258 God, can and does help to  
259 disabuse us of our man-centered  
260 religious inclinations. It  
261 does so by giving us valuable insight as  
262 we behold the man who is  
263 Jesus? We have the  
264 gospel story Jesus  
265 was real.  
266 Behold the man. And by the way,  
267 most serious historians do  
268 not dispute the fact that there was a guy  
269 named Jesus. Plenty of  
270 debate about who he really was, what he  
271 really did, what's the truth about him,  
272 but almost nobody says there never was  
273 such a guy -- too much evidence.  
274 And Jesus didn't become real because  
275 people believed in him. They  
276 generally didn't believe all that well.

277 And not well at all at the end of the  
278 story. God's kingdom did not  
279 arrive because people started believing  
280 in it and acting like it. Case  
281 in point, the Old Testament.  
282 It's all about God's faithfulness to his  
283 people. And it's all about his people's  
284 faithfulness... No, not so much.  
285 Not at all. Case in point,  
286 the New Testament, Gospel story,  
287 like the end of Mark. It's not the  
288 story of how God finally got through to  
289 people thanks to people. It's the  
290 story of how God got through to people in  
291 spite of people. Whatever  
292 happened after the end of Mark's story of  
293 Jesus, so that we are talking about it  
294 and believing in him today, was not  
295 done by men and women. It  
296 was done by God. We  
297 didn't invent the risen from the dead  
298 Lord and Savior, Jesus. Truth  
299 is, he invented  
300 us. He was the real thing  
301 before we were things at all.  
302 Behold the man.  
303 So we have the Easter discovery.  
304 Jesus was beyond people's natural  
305 perception of reality.  
306 It is very difficult, truly,  
307 to behold the man.  
308 Our view of Jesus needs to be informed  
309 and transformed by the  
310 reality of his resurrection,  
311 just as it needed to be for the women who  
312 went to the tomb on that first day after  
313 he rose. And this is not necessarily  
314 an easy transformation, and it may be  
315 marked by an initial sense of  
316 astonishment and maybe even fear.  
317 It is not easy to have your whole world  
318 radically changed. Imagine,  
319 if you lived your whole life in some kind  
320 of long-term night,  
321 the rising of the sun in the  
322 sky and the awakening of  
323 light in our eyes, with all of  
324 its enormous benefits and positive  
325 changes, would be immediately  
326 blinding and inescapably  
327 frightening. until we were able slowly to  
328 adjust to the radical new reality come  
329 upon us. The rising of the Son of  
330 God and the awakening of the kingdom of  
331 God in and around us can have  
332 similar effects, as we see at  
333 the end of Mark's gospel.  
334 Caution, we are not  
335 ultimately to trust in  
336 our view of Jesus.  
337 We are to trust in  
338 Jesus. Our view of him  
339 and of the world will change  
340 accordingly. The apostle Paul  
341 was compelled to behold the man, the  
342 risen Jesus, on his way to Damascus to  
343 persecute the followers of Christ. He  
344 writes of the change in his view of  
345 reality by the change in his view of

346 Jesus in his second letter to the  
347 Corinthians, chapter five, verse 16.  
348 From now on, therefore, we regard no  
349 one according to the flesh. Even though  
350 we once regarded Christ according to the  
351 flesh, we regard him thus  
352 no longer. Jesus comes from  
353 beyond the limits of our experience and  
354 understanding, so he brings real  
355 help into our experience and  
356 understanding. Our view of Jesus  
357 conforms to reality more and more  
358 because Jesus, God the Son,  
359 together with God the Father and God the  
360 Holy Spirit, reveals himself  
361 to us, like at the end of the gospel  
362 of Mark. So we have the  
363 reality of reconciling these two  
364 realities, Jesus was real, and  
365 Jesus was beyond people's natural  
366 perception of reality, we  
367 reconcile These two realities, this  
368 reconciliation was and is a  
369 post-resurrection possibility, leading to  
370 this conclusion: Jesus  
371 is real, and so is his  
372 kingdom. Not just  
373 Jesus was real,  
374 but Jesus is  
375 real. In this, then, material  
376 reality is affirmed, not denied.  
377 Jesus is real. He  
378 was and he is a part of this  
379 real world. And the deadly whole physical  
380 decay and earthbound vision has on  
381 us is broken.  
382 Jesus is beyond our perception of  
383 reality. What do we do?  
384 Trust in Jesus. Whatever  
385 you know of Jesus, whatever you've gotten  
386 from God's word, from other folks that  
387 believe in him, trust in as much as  
388 of Jesus. as you know.  
389 Rest in Him. Believe that He has  
390 risen from the dead. Follow Him.  
391 Know ourselves to be safe and secure.  
392 Death, are you listening?  
393 Safe and secure, because He  
394 makes us safe and secure in Him.  
395 High above and moving within all our  
396 earthly kingdoms, God's  
397 kingdom is real.  
398 It's all about Jesus, not us.  
399 Jesus is real.  
400 Behold the man.  
401 He is risen. He  
402 is risen indeed. Amen, let's pray.  
403 Lord God, Savior Jesus,  
404 Holy Spirit, we thank you  
405 for this day. day that marks the  
406 time to remember and to  
407 celebrate that you defeated death.  
408 That enemy of all of us that  
409 most of us spend a lot of time and energy  
410 trying to ignore, trying to deny, is  
411 trying to think about something else, try  
412 to live as though it just keeps on going.  
413 And yet, all the evidence tells us that  
414 it doesn't, not this physical existence.

415 But Lord, you came into this physical  
416 existence, You shared our  
417 humanity to the full. You lived,  
418 and you died, like we do.  
419 And you rose from the grave.  
420 And you promised the same  
421 for all who trust in you.  
422 Thank you. Lord, with every bit of  
423 faith that we have, and you said,  
424 faith the size of a mustard seed was  
425 enough, help us. to  
426 trust in you. We pray this in  
427 your name and for your sake. Amen. Amen.  
428 It's time for us to pray for one another.  
429 I would encourage you to take a look  
430 today and maybe throughout the week, if  
431 you can, at the prayers  
432 and praises page in your bulletin insert,  
433 Covenant Connection.  
434 Again, I would remind you, if you'd like  
435 us to join with you in prayer for anyone,  
436 you can use those prayer cards, and if  
437 you just put 'em on the desk in the  
438 office or in the box at the back of the  
439 sanctuary, we can get those requests and  
440 pray with you. Let's pray.  
441 Lord God, we thank you again for this  
442 day, for all that we have to celebrate.  
443 We thank you for each other, for the gift  
444 of life and love and health and wholeness  
445 that you have given to each one of us. We  
446 pray for those who have asked us to pray  
447 for them. We pray for our church,  
448 that we truly would be a church without  
449 your kingdom and not about ours.  
450 That we would serve your purposes and  
451 bring praise to you. Lord, we pray for  
452 Gary and Shirley, for the  
453 Lowe's, for Bernardo,  
454 for Vicky, for Barbara.  
455 Pray for your healing and comfort.  
456 In their times of difficulty, Lord, we  
457 pray for Christians in Syria being  
458 persecuted and some being killed.  
459 Ask you to find a way to  
460 bring relief to people there and in other  
461 parts of the world where there is great  
462 oppression. Lord, we pray  
463 for those who have lost loved ones, for  
464 the Shields family, for the family of  
465 George and Brett and David,  
466 asking for your comfort that goes beyond  
467 our understanding to be with them. Pray  
468 for our neighbors next door, for  
469 your blessing today, on your special  
470 day, wherever they may be, where we pray  
471 for those serving in the military, for  
472 Noah, for Taryn, for Cody, Matthew,  
473 Weston, Chase, Levi, Gary,  
474 Molly, Brian, Anna,  
475 Margaret, Benjamin, and Chandler.  
476 Pray that you'd watch over them, keep  
477 them safe. Bless them.  
478 Hear us now as we share together in your  
479 special prayer, saying: Our Father,  
480 who art in heaven, hallowed be thy  
481 name, thy kingdom come,  
482 thy will be done, on earth  
483 as it is in heaven. Give us this

484 day our daily bread, and forgive  
485 us our sins as we forgive  
486 those who sin against us, and  
487 lead us not into temptation, but  
488 deliver us from evil. For thine  
489 is the kingdom and the power  
490 and the glory forever.  
491 Amen. Let's stand and sing our closing  
492 hymn number 277  
493 Christ the.