



Empowering People to Change the World

**Easter 2016**  
**Rising Strong**

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## **Rising Strong**

### **Resurrection week 2016**

#### **Mark 16:1-11**

**Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother of* James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.**

**6 But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 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.”**

**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.**

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

I want to talk about the power of the resurrection in our own personal lives. I'm entitling this Easter message, Rising Strong. I stole the title from Brene Brown's book by the same title. My message is different but I like her title.

#### **5 Truths you must believe in order to Rise Strong**

1. Jesus truly died and rose from the grave. This is not theoretical; this is not metaphorical; this is not philosophical. Rather, one must believe that Jesus bodily rose from the grave

2. Jesus is the first fruits of our own resurrection. If you are a Jesus disciple, if you have surrendered your heart to Him, Jesus is our forerunner of the resurrection you will experience upon passing from this life on earth to a new life in the presence of Jesus
3. When we surrender our life to Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our heart and renews our life. We are given a new heart, a heart of flesh, a heart of love, a heart that is engrafted with the love and power of Jesus
4. To “Rise Strong”, the theme of our Resurrection Week at The Road, you must actualize these truths in your life.
  - It’s not automatic nor is it a given that you will. Most people who call themselves Christians never get to this part.
  - Thus, they are living sub-christian lives that are just like everyone else, even those who are non-christians
  - They are not only NOT “Rising Strong”, they are growing weaker!
5. But to Rise Strong as a Jesus disciple takes great courage, resolve, and resiliency! It will take everything within you, all of God’s power flowing through you. Quite frankly, it’s all about being Wholehearted

**To Rise Strong is to be Wholehearted! To be wholehearted takes courage and tenacity**

All of us fail! All of us, at the heart level are weak and vulnerable at times

- This is the starting point—that you are weak, that sometimes you fail, that often you hurt people, that you are prideful at times, that what you blame others for, you have committed.
- You’re a spiritual felon! We are no different than those people in our story who are afraid even when they see Jesus—we are full of fear
- The starting point is that you have deep hurts in your life—you were born into a sinful selfish world and most people don’t care about you

- You are born into a world controlled by Satan and he wants to “steal, kill, and destroy” heart
- Satan’s goal is to steal your heart, kill your drive, and destroy your life!
- All of us have a “Spiritual Police Record” of lying, fudging on truth, lust, jealousy, and pain

**The Truth is that failing hurts, sin hurts, falling hurts—the dare is to keep being brave and courageous and get back up again—to Rise Strong!**

- How do we Rise Strong? How do we get up again and again. How do we actualize the resurrection of Christ in our life, in our relationships, and in our walk with Jesus?

**It’s about being wholehearted!**

- I define wholeheart living as engaging our lives from a place of intimate love, acceptance, and worthiness.
- It means cultivating the courage to wake up in the morning and think, no matter how much I fail, how much I don’t get done, Christ in me is enough and I’m still beloved.
- It’s going to bed at night and thinking, yes, I’m imperfect, yes I blew it today, but I’m still beloved and worthy of love because Jesus says so.
- Being wholehearted is saying to yourself, “I will face the dark places of my heart because Jesus rose from the dead, and in His power, I can rise out of this darkness. Because if I don’t, if I keep hiding out in my addictions, selfishness, and shame, I will kill continue to kill myself: kill my vision, kill my spirit, kill my heart, kill my creativity, and kill my ability to experience love, forgiveness, and joy. But I will choose the risen Christ to live His life and power through me.”

**4 Secrets, 4 Proclamations to Rising Strong in our Hearts—you have to get this!**

## 1) You are Beloved

- Rising Strong begin right here!
- Jesus rose strong not only because he was fully God and had the power to conquer sin and death, but also because He knew He was beloved.
- Jesus, at his baptism, was told by His father that he was beloved, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased”
- Jesus loved people because he knew he was loved. His love flowed from knowing the intimate love of His Father
- Jesus forgave people because he knew that he was forgiven
- You are beloved because Jesus loved you enough to die for you
- Henri Nouwen, in writing an agnostic Jewish friend, in trying to describe the meaning of life, says it this way, “All I want you to know that is that you are beloved...My only desire is to make these words reverberate in every corner of your being—you are beloved.”<sup>1</sup>
- You are beloved because you are worthy of God’s love. You are worthy of his love because Jesus loves you
- You may have never heard the words “love” or “beloved” from your earthly parents, probably because they never knew they were loved, but you are loved
- Rising Strong is only possible through a personal experience of God’s love for you
- The Bible says:

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Nouwen, *ibid*, p. 26.

- ***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***
- ***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!***
- ***In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.***

## 2) You are Courageous

- It takes courage to say “I am beloved.” It takes courage to say “I’m going to face my shame and my selfishness”
- It takes courage to admit, to be vulnerable, and to battle for your heart
- Iraneous: “the glory of God is a fully alive human being.”
- To be fully alive—Rising Stronger than our circumstances—takes courage and daring
- Resurrection life is not just that Jesus rose up from death, but that we can rise up from death
- Paul had courage to live the crucified life: ***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20***
- We’ve lost our hearts today. We’ve turned in our courageous heart for a religion of sin management. Following our heart, working to build a courageous heart is the Wholeheart Life

- David had it. The description of David, one thousand years after his life—after the murder, the adultery, the betrayals, and the huge mistakes of his life—given to us by Paul
- ***I have found David[a] the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will. Acts 13:22***
- David was a courageous worshipper and warrior because he knew he was beloved

**You are Beloved,  
You are Courageous,**

### **Thirdly, You are Successful**

- This week I struggled with dark thoughts: “How could you build a church into the thousands and then lose it all? You are such an idiot! You are worthless!” Tears filled my eyes, loneliness crept in, darkness spread across my heart.
- The Holy Spirit reminded me of a passage from a little book I read a couple of years ago, *Life of the Beloved*, written by a catholic priest. I looked it up.

*You are beloved...It certainly is not easy to hear that voice in a world filled with voices that shout, ‘You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless; you are despicable, you are nobody—unless you can demonstrate the opposite. These negative voices are so loud and persistent that it is easy to believe them. That’s the great trap. The trap of self-rejection. Over the years I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection...When we come to believe the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions...Being the beloved is the core truth of our existence.*

- Being beloved is the core identity of our existence! When I first read those words two years ago, at the lowest valley of my life, it was sparkling refreshing water to my beaten down famished heart.

- For one whose very existence had been defined by outward achievements, my heart came alive with faith and expectation as I shouted out, “I am beloved! I am beloved! I am loved by Jesus Christ!” That day was the beginning of a new paradigm of success.
- Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul, found in Galatians 2:20 as expressed in *The Message*,

*I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.*

- Paul looked so unflinchingly at himself, others, and the world through the eyes of Jesus, that his ego became that of Christ. His core identity was Christ. The love of Christ buoyed every thought and was the plumbline of success in his life. Didymus of Alexandria once said, “Paul was full of Christ.”
- Intimacy with Christ, identity of the cross, and the intention to gaze upon the crucified Christ was the vision of Paul.
- To Rise Strong is a new way of defining success. Not in the ways we’ve grown up hearing—being the CEO, having the largest whatever, or being a star athlete
- But in knowing the Risen One and experiencing His love in our life
- Jesus rose strong. You can rise strong through defining success in a radically new paradigm
- “I’m successful based on experiencing God’s love in my life”
- It’s a life of making the primary aim of your heart—a wholeheart—I’m beloved, I’m courageous, I’m successful



- It's all about making your heart your aim. Instead of the bullseye being how big your salary is, how high you are on the Org chart, it becomes loving God
- You can only love yourself if you experience God's love for you—now that's success. Such love breaks the power of shame

#### 4) You are a Lover

- When we learn to experience God's love, we can give that experience away to others—God's love given to you so that you have the power to give it away to others
- The Bible says:
  - ***By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.***
  - ***And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another,***
- We become authentic! We become real people!
- We become vulnerable with our lives because we don't have to present ourselves a certain way to win their approval
- To Rise Strong in your life, you must proclaim in your heart and experience this reality:
  - I am beloved
  - I am courageous
  - I am successful
  - I am a lover of others
- This summer, there will be two major opportunities to love our city, love people: Springs Initiative, going out and painting houses in the poorest neighborhood