

Series: Hidden Life

April 1, 2018

## **Title: Life!**

**[Slide 1]**

**Text: Mark 16:1-8**

### **Hiding Life**

**Life in hiding:**

**[Slide 2]**

Where would you hide Life?

That's the question haunting NASA scientists when they look up into the night sky at the Red Planet. Mars, our nearest neighbor, is by far the most likely place outside Planet Earth to find living things. At one time Mars was a much more hospitable place for life: it had oceans and rivers, an atmosphere, and a more temperate climate. Even now, long since the last of its seas evaporated into outer space, rovers have found evidence of organic compounds and water on Mars.

So where would Mars hide life? Where would life be most likely to survive, or even thrive in such a hostile environment? The most likely place is deep in the Martian rocks and soil. Some scientists speculate that somewhere under the Martian surface is an aquifer that holds as much water as Lake Superior.

And where there's water, there can be life. You just have to go looking for it.

**Unlikely hiding places:**

**[Slide 3]**

The fact is, scientists keep finding life here on earth in the most unlikely places. It seems that Earth has a way of hiding life in places that would seem death traps. Take for example the discovery of vibrant deep sea communities of living organism, from bacteria and sea worms to strange crustaceans, all clustered around an undersea volcanic vent!

**[Slide 4]**

No light. Immense pressure. No food. Volcanic vents streaming noxious gases and chemicals into the sea. And yet even there life found a way to thrive. Scientists speculate that life began inhabiting these places shortly after the creation of the planet. Talk about a good hiding place!

### **Where would God hide Life itself?**

Which brings me to an even bigger question: Where would God hide Life itself? Not just living things, but the Life that gives life to everything else. Would He tuck it away somewhere in the spiritual realm? Or would He tuck it away somewhere where we could find it – if we were willing to take up the quest?

### **[Slide 5]**

The story of the Bible gives us some hints as to where Life might be found. For starters, the Creation Story tells us that God planted a very special tree – The Tree of Life – in the garden that He planted next to His earthly home. The people for whom the Bible was first written would have understood what was going on: It was customary to build a temple for a god, then plant a luxurious garden next to it. This is what God did for Himself. Eden was His earthly temple, and the Garden of Eden was attached to it. He put humans in the garden to tend it, and came “in the cool of the evening” to take a stroll and spend time with them.

Except that the human caretakers of the life-giving garden failed to making finding God’s Life their highest priority. As a result, they were put out of the Garden, and The Tree of Life was put under lock and key – guarded by cherubim with flaming swords.

### **The Life Vault**

#### **Life appears:**

Then one day a Jewish rabbi announced that God had decided to open the gate to the Garden. God would again dwell with His people. The Tree of Life would no longer be guarded by cherubim with flaming swords. Instead of living in the Kingdom of Death, Jesus announced that presence of the Kingdom of God. He said:

**[Slide 6]**

*John 10:10 NIV*

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

Now at last it would be possible to answer the question: Where would God hide Life itself?

But the answer to that question – the one thing that we all need to know more than anything else in this world – would come in a mysterious and unexpected way.

**The Life Vault:**

On Good Friday evening the Person who came to give God's Life hung lifeless on a Roman cross. Mark tells us that a prominent member of the Jewish community named Joseph asked the Roman governor for Jesus' body so that he could give the rabbi a decent burial. Pilate verified that Jesus was truly dead, then gave Joseph permission to have the body.

**[Slide 7]**

*Mark 15:46 NIV*

*So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock.*

John adds a significant detail to the story:

**[Slide 8]**

*John 19:41 NIV*

*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been put.*

Matthew tells us that Pilate gave the order that the tomb entrance be locked up tight:

**[Slide 9]**

*Matthew 27:65-66 NIV*

*"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.*

The One who was Life lay lifeless in a stone vault.

### **The perfect hiding place:**

It was the perfect place for God to hide The One Who is Life. All the familiar clues were there: a garden, a chamber, guards, a tree. It's just that each of these clues were the opposite of what you would expect.

- First, the garden was in a *cemetery*.
- Second, the sacred chamber was a *tomb*.
- Third, instead of cherubim, the tomb was guarded by *Roman soldiers*.
- Finally, the tree was the *bloody pole* on the top of the nearby hill to which the crossbeam that Jesus carried to Calvary had been attached.

It was in this Anti-Eden that God chose as the hiding place for Life.

### **Find Life!**

#### **Easter morning:**

Of course, the Garden of Eden was the farthest thing from the minds of the women who bought spices and brought them to the tomb on Easter morning. They came to finish a hastily done funeral. Their biggest concern was how to get *into the tomb*. For them it was the Vault of Death.

When they got to the garden, however, they discovered that Heaven had already arrived:

#### **[Slide 10]**

*Mark 16:4-5 NIV*

*But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

They had stumbled into Life's temporary hiding place – a tomb that had become God's Life Vault. The tomb lay open to the whole wide world, and

Heaven's guard carried no sword. Instead, he announced that Life itself had gone forth from this place of death:

**[Slide 11]**

*Mark 16:6-7 NIV*

*"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

The Life that had been hidden away in a tomb since Friday night was now on the loose. The Life Vault had been opened. Death's prison had been no match for the Life that had been temporarily hidden inside it. As Peter would tell a crowd a few weeks later:

**[Slide 12]**

*Acts 2:23-24 NIV*

*"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

**[Slide 13]**

*"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, **because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**"*

The cemetery had become Eden's Garden. The whole wide world had instantly become Life's Home. And the bloody post on the hill had become for us all The Tree of Life.

**Go find Him!**

The young man gave the bewildered and terrified women their assignment: Go find the One who is Life. Go to Galilee. He's waiting there for you. You'll find Him. You'll see Him. You will find Life.

Mark ends his story with the women running from the tomb:

**[Slide 14]**

*Mark 16:8 NIV*

*Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

That's what it's like when you stumble onto holy ground. That's what happens when you find yourself in God's hideout. It totally shakes up your world.

**Life:**

**[Slide 15]**

The young man's command was not just for the terrified women who had come to finish Jesus' funeral. His command is for you as well: GO! Go look for Life. God has hidden His Life right under your nose. But you have to pick up the clues. It's your quest. No one else can do it for you.

What clues, you may ask? Well, remember that Life sometimes hides where you least expect it. It hides in desperate places, it can be found where you would expect nothing by death. We all have such places. We all find ourselves walking to the cemetery where some piece of us, our dreams, our love, our hope, our faith, is buried.

But watch out! Take up this quest and you will find that the cemetery could be that long lost Garden. The pole on which your dreams and hopes died could actually be the Tree of Life. And the same Jesus who rose from Death on Easter morning is waiting for you.