

Easter

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Date: 31 March 2024

[0 : 00] For the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Jesus' body was laid in this tomb. Then they went home and they prepared spices and perfumes for Jesus' body.

! But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandments. It seems amazing to me that these women who had followed Jesus, Jesus was their spiritual hero, they would still live in obedience to God.

Even though Jesus had died, all their hopes for what Jesus was going to do for them dashed away. Yet they were still obedient to God.

There's something you can think about and learn from there. But we're going to move on. We're going to move to the day itself. Resurrection Sunday. Verse 24.

It reads this. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices, they prepared them, and they went to the tomb. They needed to go early in the morning.

[1 : 06] There was a sense of urgency about this. They had to wait a whole day. I also think there might have been some fear there. See, very early in the morning, when I was walking down to church this morning, it was quiet.

There was hardly anybody around. These women are going to Jesus too. Jesus has been put to death by the Roman authorities.

Anyone following him, well, it's probably going to be dangerous for them too. And so they need to get this done early in the morning. They don't want to be caught by anybody.

So they get up very early in the morning. It's quiet. Nobody around. And what do you think they're expecting when they come to the tomb?

What do you think they're expecting, Isaac? The stone. The stone to where the tomb. With the body. Yeah, they're expecting the stone there, and they're expecting a tomb with the body in it, just like Friday.

[2 : 11] That's what happened. That's what they're expecting. But can anyone look at verse 2 and tell me, what do they find? What do they find there in verse 2?

Can anybody tell me? Let's have a look around. Gracie. The stone rolled away.

And were you going to say something else? Yeah, and the body was gone. We'll get there in a moment properly. But let's think about the stone. The stone's rolled away.

They would have been expecting, as Isaac said, they would have been expecting, come to the tomb and find a stone in front of it. They'd have probably been wondering, how are we going to move this stone?

It would have taken some strong men to move it. Maybe this doesn't surprise us, because we've read this so many times, but this would be such a shock to them.

[3 : 09] But it's okay. The stone's rolled away. That's not a problem for them anymore. They can just walk inside and get to Jesus' body.

But what do they find inside? I think Gracie's already told us, actually. Do you want to tell us again? Yeah. The body was gone. It's there in verse 3.

They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoa. That would have been a shock. They'd seen him die. They'd seen his body put in the tomb, and they were ready and expecting Jesus' body there, but there's no body.

I love cream eggs, as you've probably got the impression from me giving away an empty cream egg wrapper. I love that inside a cream egg is the gooey, sticky, creamy stuff.

It's so good. I'm kind of hopeful, maybe I'll go home and eat one later today. But can you imagine, if I get home, and I open up a wrapper for cream egg, and I take a bite into it, and it's empty.

[4 : 25] How awful would that be? It would be a shock. It'd be so disappointing. And for these women, that's probably how they're feeling.

If you can imagine what it's like to find a hollow cream egg, that's probably what they're feeling. What's happened? This is terrible. Their minds are probably racing. Has someone come and stolen the body? Where's it gone? But they didn't have much time to think. Have a look there in verse 4.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. Whoa.

Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning. Big shock. How are they feeling?

[5 : 26] Can anybody look at verse 5? Look at verse 5 and tell me, how are they feeling? Let's go, Bethany. Frightened.

Yeah. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. See their fear. They're frightened.

First, the stone has rolled away. Second, the body of Jesus is not there. And third, these men have come and stood before them in bright, shining clothes.

They are frightened. What's going on, they must have thought. We're so frightened. We don't understand. But look at verse 5 again.

Look at what they did. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. Bowed down.

[6 : 24] These were heavenly beings in front of them. Bowed down because God's involved. God is at work here. They expected a dead body in a tomb with a stone rolled over it.

They were probably fearful of being caught. But now they're in fear because they just don't know what's happening. And in our lives, we may fear at times because we don't know what's happening. We may be frightened. Things may not feel right. Maybe as we look at the news and see awful things which are going on in our world. Maybe it's in our own lives.

Difficult situations we're going through. We're like, we don't know what's going on. We're frightened. These women didn't know what was going on here. But they bowed down.

There were heavenly creatures here. God was involved. They felt fearful but God's involved. And we may not know what's going on all the time.

[7 : 36] We may feel fearful but know this. God knew exactly what was going to happen on Good Friday. And he knew exactly what was happening here. He knew that Jesus was risen.

It was his salvation plan being worked out. Easter helps to remind us that whilst we may not understand what's going on in our lives we may be fearful of the future we can still bow down before the Lord Almighty who is in control.

And we need to hear this news. Second, hear the news. I've spoken of some empty things. The empty milk carton.

The toilet roll. How awful it would be to find an empty toilet roll when you most need it. I've spoken about an empty cream egg.

We've seen an empty coffee cup an empty water bottle an empty thing. Empty Amazon package. But you know what? We find another empty thing at Easter.

[8 : 46] I'm just going to get it out of the bag. It's very exciting this one. It's an Easter egg. What's inside an Easter egg?

Usually. Something. Something. You sure? Inside this egg? Yeah, something. I think.

Well, maybe I just need to open it and show us. I think. Nothing's inside. It's just hollow chocolate. Although it's now chocolate pieces.

Nothing's inside Easter eggs. And we love eating. We find so much joy in eating hollow, empty Easter eggs. They fill us with joy.

Joy. When we're eating our Easter eggs later, I want us to be thinking, as we see the emptiness in the middle, as we see the hollowness, I want us to be thinking about something else that's empty.

[9 : 47] And it's there in verse 6. The angels, the brightly dressed men, say, why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here. He is risen. That tomb is empty because Jesus is risen. Your hollow Easter egg can remind you that there is an empty tomb.

Why not even say to yourself, verse 6, as you're eating your Easter egg, He is not here. He is risen. That would be a good thing to do this afternoon, if you haven't eaten your Easter eggs already.

See, not all empty things are bad. Imagine with me for a moment. Imagine with me that you open Luke 24 and you read this.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. And they got to the tomb and they saw the stone and it was rolled over.

[10:56] So they went to find Peter and John and Andrew who came to move the stone out of the way. And then they walk inside the tomb and put the spices on Jesus' body and then they sealed up the tomb and walked away.

Imagine that's what you read in Luke's Gospel. Imagine that that was how our Bibles ended. Would you want to be following someone like that?

Someone who has died and stayed dead. Do you think we'd be here singing these songs about Jesus if that had happened?

At best, we would be thinking if we thought at all about Jesus, oh, some great man who did lots of wonderful things but he died like the rest of us.

But that's not the story. This is a great empty thing. The tomb is empty. Death has been beaten. Jesus died. He was put in the tomb.

[12:05] He breathed his last. But now after three days in the tomb, he is risen. He is alive and he is well. Jesus has done something that nobody else in all of history has been able to do and he has risen from the dead.

Maybe, just maybe this morning, we ourselves are feeling a bit empty. We're feeling a bit like the empty milk carton. We're feeling empty.

We're feeling hopeless. We feel like life is hard. We feel so uncertain about the future.

Well, the news of verse 6 can fill us with hope. Jesus has risen from the dead and that changes everything.

Jesus died for our sins on the cross on the Friday to bring us to God's. And the resurrection shows that his work of salvation is now done.

[13:13] It's complete. We can live forever with God's. We have a hope in Jesus of a world to come without any death, without any mourning, without any crying, without any pain for the old order of things has passed away.

This is certain hope that can fill our empty souls with joy and peace and certain hope for the future. This is really good news for us.

There's a couple more things to see, but first we're going to sing again. We're going to sing what is our hope in life and death. This is true. Luke's not trying to con us.

If he were, he would have not put the women there first. Maybe not even at all. So first thing.

Second thing, this is God's deliberate plan being worked out.

Verse 7. The angels said to the women, remember how he told you whilst he was in Galilee, the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified on the third day, and be raised again.

[14:29] Now if I told you that I'm going to die tomorrow and rise again three days later, you'd think I'm being completely foolish. I have no, no authority to say that.

But Jesus did. Twice in Luke's gospel, in Luke chapter 9 and Luke chapter 18, Jesus said that he would be handed over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and then rise again.

And Jesus said that and it's either going to happen or not. If it doesn't happen then, well, we can't trust what Jesus says.

But here in Luke 24, we see that it did happen. We see verse 6, he is not here, he is risen. This is God's deliberate plan.

The Son of God says it's going to happen and it does happen. And so verse 8, the women, they remembered his words.

[15:39] They remembered words that they probably not even wanted to think about, that Jesus was going to die, but rise again. And suddenly they remembered them and believed them to be true.

We've seen their fear, we've heard the news and it's all going wrong this morning. This laptop's not plugged in and telling me it's on low battery but it's okay, I've just plugged it in.

We've seen their fear, we've heard their news we've seen the evidence that it is true. And thirdly, we've got to respond. Now the click is not working.

There we go. Now respond. You may have seen this. This is what Cadbury's are doing this year with cream eggs. Isaac's seen it.

Have you had one? No, no. It would be great if we did because if you find a half and half cream egg, a white chocolate and a milk chocolate cream egg, you could win up to, as in very small writing there, you could win up to £10,000.

[16:54] Very exciting. If you get one of these, you have to respond, don't you? The best way to respond to this, getting one of these, is by telling Cadbury's and trying trying to get some money.

But you could open it up and just think, well, some mistakes happen, that's a load of nonsense, and just eat it or throw it in the bin.

Something's gone wrong. Well, how do we respond to the news that there is an empty tomb?

Because I think we have to respond somehow.

And we see three responses in this passage. And the first is from the women. Verse 9. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others.

They tell. They tell the news. He is not here. He has risen. They couldn't hide it. They couldn't keep it to themselves. I think if I got one of these, I would soon tell you about it.

[18:05] But what about this? Jesus has risen from the dead. Does that make you want to go and tell people? That's brilliant, life-changing news.

Or you could do this. You could dismiss as nonsense. Just like you could dismiss that half-and-half cream egg that some horrible mistakes happened.

verse 11. The disciples who heard it, they did not believe the women because their words seemed like nonsense. They dismissed it as nonsense.

They heard what the women said and said, oh, don't be stupid. Of course he's not risen from the dead. How can anybody rise from the dead? He died on the cross. Are you out of your minds?

Perhaps you're here this morning and this is where you're at right now. Okay, these things are true for you, great, but I can't believe it's rubbish, nonsense.

[19:21] If that's you, that's okay. You're really welcome to be here this morning, but can I encourage you to at least think about it? Because if this news that Jesus is not here in the tomb and he is alive and risen from the dead, if this is true, then this is life changing news.

It means that whatever you can face in life, you can know peace with God. You can know your sins are forgiven and that on the day you die, you will go safely to be with him forever.

in a new and perfect world with no more death, no more crying, no more pain. So can I encourage you to do this third thing and check for yourself?

That's what Peter does. Verse 12, Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying there.

there. And he went away wondering to himself, what has happened? That's what Peter does. He gets up, he hears this news, the others dismiss it as nonsense, but he gets up and he goes to the tomb and he looks inside to see for himself that it is empty.

[20:47] And he goes away wondering, wondering, could it be, could it be true? Could it be true that Jesus has risen from the dead? And you know what, there's even a little more evidence in that verse, I think there is anyway, of the resurrection of Christ.

He saw the strips of linen lying there by themselves. If this was the work of grave robbers, why would they have taken the time to strip Jesus of the linen? So maybe the only explanation is really what it says in verse 6.

He is not here, he has risen. So can I encourage you to at least go away from this morning and check for yourself? On the way out, on the table, on the way out, there's some books, Luke's Gospels.

You can take them. You're really welcome to. It's a free gift from us. Take it. Have a read. Have a read of the Lord Jesus. Have a read again of this account in Luke 24.

See the tomb is empty. Consider these things for yourself. And if you want to chat more, please do chat to myself or someone you've come with this morning.

[22:10] We would love to speak more to you about this because this is life changing. You can have your sins forgiven and know life forever in the risen Lord Jesus.

And why not come back? Come back and join us again this evening. And we meet every Sunday, 11 o'clock and 6.30. You're so welcome to be here. The tomb is empty.

This is good news. And we're going to sing a song to praise the risen Lord Jesus for you.