

# The risen Jesus

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[0:00] Does anyone know who this lion is?! That is good.

And in the Chronicles of Narnia, in the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe, as the Pevensy children go in and discover this world, Narnia, through a wardrobe of all things, it's amazing, they see that all is not well in Narnia.

They see that the wicked white witch is active there. And one of the children, Edmund, he is taken in by the white witch.

But amazingly, Aslan steps in to save Edmund from her evil power. But then the wicked white witch won't leave it there.

She wants to put Edmund to death. And so Aslan, he steps in to die in the place of Edmund. And we're going to see in a video, we might need to dim the lights, hopefully we'll be able to see.

[1:31] If not, you'll be able to work it out. What happens to Aslan as he dies? Susan!

Susan! It's Aslan!

What have they done? Aslan!

Hopefully, we at least saw the very end of that, where Aslan appears. Aslan appears. Aslan appears. again from the dead. He had died, but then he rose. And that changes everything in Narnia.

It's an amazing story. And on Good Friday, we remembered Jesus who had died, who had died as a sacrifice in our place on the cross. But that happened on earth. And we know that when people die, they stay dead, don't they? Dead people stay dead. This world isn't like the Chronicles of Narnia when we see people rising again. He was taken down off the cross on that Friday night and he was buried in the tomb. And to be honest, everything happened in a rush on that Friday night. It was Passover, it was heading into the Sabbath day.

[3:43] And they had to get everything just sorted in a hurry for Jesus' body to be put in the tomb so people could concentrate on the Sabbath. And for Mary, one of Jesus' followers, she had a hard time that weekend. It wasn't the goodbye she would have wanted. She saw Jesus suffer a horrible death on a cross. And so she, and we read in other Gospels, along with a few other women, head to the tomb very early in the morning. Apparently, it was probably between about three and six in the morning. So it was still dark.

And they wouldn't have been expecting much because, as I've just said, dead people stay dead. They're on their way to the tomb. There's a discussion in one of the Gospels about who's going to move the stone out the way of the tomb. But that first Easter morning wasn't all it seemed. It's a bit like a kinder surprise egg. Do you know these eggs? They look like an ordinary chocolate egg on the outside, but inside there's a surprise, a bit like this one. And in our passage, there's some surprises.

Things happen that are unexpected, that are out of the ordinary. This is no ordinary day. And that's why we're gathered even now in this room, 2,000 odd years later, to remember that first Easter Sunday. So, surprise number one. We're going to sing two surprises in this part, and then we'll sing, read some more, and two surprises in the next part. So, surprise number one. The stone has been removed. Have a look. Chapter 20, verse 1 in our Bibles. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

This is a surprise because this is no ordinary stone. It's not like a stone you'd pick up at Brighton Beach. This is a big, huge gravestone. Apparently, not many people had tombs like this at the time. These were tombs for very rich people. Joseph of Arimathea, who owned the tomb, kindly offered up this tomb for Jesus, his body, to be buried in. Otherwise, his body would have been treated like the rest of the criminals, been kind of thrown onto a bit of a scrap heap. So, this was a grand tomb for Jesus to be laid in, and it had a grand stone. I wouldn't have been able to move it on my own. I'd need at least two or three of you to help me because this was a huge stone. And so, for Mary and the others who were with her to come and find that it had been removed would have been an extraordinary thing. And this is going to bring big questions, brings big questions to Mary's mind. Who's moved the stone? What has happened here? Where is Jesus' body? Have they taken it away? She's worried. She's panicked. This is not ordinary. And so, begins quite a lot of running about.

[7:10] There's a lot of panic going on. And so, she goes running. Verse 2, she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they put him. In Mary's mind, the only possible solution here is that someone has taken this body out of the tomb. They've stolen it away, taken it away, and I don't know where they've put him. Because after all, dead people stay dead. It's not the Chronicles of Narnia. It's not a Hollywood film. This is real life.

But this also leads us to surprise number two, which we've kind of seen already. But here's the other big surprise. There is no body in the tomb. There is no body in the tomb. It was definitely there on the Friday night. The end of the previous chapter tells us that because it was the Jewish day of preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. Jesus' body was definitely laid in the tomb on the Friday. Now it's not there. The tomb is empty. Something has happened. It's a bit of a mystery. And when there's a mystery, we often get detectives.

And we're going to kind of be a bit like detectives this morning as we look through the next verses to see what could have possibly happened here at the site of the empty tomb.

[8:49] It's a mystery. It's a mystery. It's a mystery. Because we see Mary here. We see it's early in the morning. You know what? Early in the morning, I'm not at my best. My eyes are still waking up. I might not be thinking quite properly.

It's dark as well. And I've never been in a tomb, but I imagine that's quite a dark place as well. Mary could have been just very tired. She's upset. It's been a hard weekend. And so she goes and tells Peter and John, we believe, as the other disciple who wrote this gospel. She goes and tells them, and they're going to have a look as well. They're going to see, is what Mary says here, is it right? Is the tomb empty? What has happened? So be prepared for some more running. And we have a bit of a race going on between Peter and John. Verse three, so Peter and the other disciples started for the tomb.

Both of them were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over, looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Peter and John, they kind of have a bit of a race. And John wants us to know he got there first. And when he gets there, he bends in and looks into the tomb. He peeks inside. He has a look at what Mary had seen just before. And he indeed sees that the tomb is empty. He sees the strips of linen lying there that were on Jesus' body, but there is no body of Jesus. It's not there. And then Peter comes. He's a bit slower. So verse six, then Simon Peter came along behind him. He doesn't do any of this standing outside, peeking in. He goes straight into the tomb. And that's what it says in verse six. He saw the strips of linen lying there as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying its place separate from the linen. He sees what John saw and what Mary saw, the strips of linen. He also sees the cloth that was apparently wrapped around Jesus' head. And some of our Bibles, they say that that cloth was folded up nice and neatly. So the big surprise is that the gravestone is not there and there is no body in this tomb.

So what's happened? Mary could be right. They could have taken his body away. It could have been stolen. It could have been stolen by the Romans or the Jewish leaders. That's a possibility. Do you know what?

[11:44] I think it seems strange that they would have stolen it and then not told people, here's the body. Because so many people came to believe that Jesus had risen and they didn't want people to believe in Jesus. They killed him. They wanted him out of the way and dead and forgotten. They didn't want people thinking they had risen again. They could have been the disciples. Jesus had told them that he'd rise again.

But if we look in verse 9, as John writes, he shows us that they still did not understand at this point from the Scriptures that Jesus had to rise again. And if we read on in John chapter 20, and if you come tonight, we'll have a look at it, we see that the disciples are a fearful bunch of people and they've locked themselves away in a room. So I don't think it was the disciples stealing the body. And so I think we have to say and think very seriously that Jesus is alive here. That the body is empty because he has risen from the dead. There is nobody in the tomb.

So what does the next couple of verses say? If we have a look at verse 8, what does that say? It says, Finally, the other disciple, John, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and he believed.

He hadn't yet come to understand from the Scriptures that Jesus had risen, but he went in and he stood there and he believed. He began to believe that this tomb was empty because Jesus had risen.

[13:36] And I wonder what was going through his mind. I wonder whether he had remembered that time in John chapter 11 where Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb.

Maybe he remembered these great words of Jesus where Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though he dies.

And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Jesus said those words. He called Lazarus out of Lazarus out of his tomb who was dead. And now he goes even further. He goes one better.

And he himself raises himself up from the dead. The tomb is empty. This isn't just for the lion, the witch and the wardrobe.

This isn't just for the tomb. This isn't just for the fairy tales. This is a reality that there is a tomb that had a body laying in it and now it is empty. And it's amazing, surprising, but amazing and wonderful news.

[14:50] And because the tomb is empty, people can know the life that Jesus has told that we can have in him, told us we can have in him. Because Jesus died upon the cross on the Friday to forgive us for our sins, died in our place because we sin, because we do wrong.

And because he rose again, we can trust in him. We can put our trust in him and find he gives us new life with God forever.

There is an empty tomb. Jesus is who he says he is. He is the resurrection and the life. So we've seen two surprises so far. The stone was rolled away, that huge gravestone, and the tomb is empty. We're going to see a little bit more. It's exciting stuff. We're going to see a bit more after we've sung and read some more of the Bible. So we're going to sing.

It's a Sunday. It's a great day, isn't it? I love what we've just seen in that passage about John and Peter and Mary discovering the empty tomb, the whole to-ing and fro-ing that's going around, the running around. It's thrilling to read.

But at the beginning of that second reading that we've just had, we see that Mary is just full of tears.

[16:35] She is crying. She misses Jesus. She hasn't yet come to believe that Jesus could have risen.

She thinks his body's been taken away. I think we can understand how she's feeling. It's horrible, isn't it, when we're apart from those that we love.

As I just said, I love Easter Sunday. Absolutely fantastic day. And this Easter Sunday, something is happening that hasn't happened to me before on Easter Sunday.

The person I'm going to get to marry in July is driving down from Doncaster, four hours away. It's exciting. But whenever we see each other at the moment, we have to say goodbye to each other, and we have to spend time apart from each other.

And there's usually sadness and tears when we have to say goodbye. It's not nice, is it, being apart from people that we love. And Mary knows that.

[17:47] We see that here. She is crying. Jesus has gone away. His body's not there. What have they done to him? It was an awful death on Friday.

At least give him some dignity in his death. It's understandable that she's upset. But we see two more surprises here.

Two more surprises. Surprise number three. Angels. That's what we see. Verse 11. Angels were there.

And if angels are there, that must mean that God is at work. This isn't the work of some grave robbers. No, angels are sitting there in the empty tomb, and they speak to Mary.

They ask her, why are you crying? I don't think Mary really realizes they're angels. I think she's so upset. Her tears covering her face.

[19:04] Grief in her eyes. She's not really thinking very straight at all. She's so upset. It's all so sad and confusing.

But angels are there. God is at work. And then we read in verse 14.

At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there. Jesus turns up now. Jesus, who was buried in that tomb, is now standing with her.

But she did not realize that it was Jesus. And he asked her, woman, why are you crying? Who is it you're looking for? Thinking he was the gardener.

She said, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will go and get him. She doesn't yet see it's Jesus.

[20:04] She's so upset. And Jesus is the last person she's expecting to see. She thinks he's the gardener.

But then we see surprise number four. For Mary. Jesus has really risen.

And I love this bit. Verse 16. Jesus said to her, Mary. And she turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher.

She discovers that Jesus is alive. That this person standing next to her is not the gardener. No, it's Jesus. He really has risen from the dead.

And he calls her name. And she says, Rabboni. You can feel the excitement in her voice. Her teacher is there.

[21:07] And it reminds me of some other words in John's Gospel where Jesus says this. He described himself as the good shepherds. And people who follow a shepherd, they're sheep.

And he says this. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. Mary is there weeping.

And she hears the words of Jesus, her good shepherds. And she knows that voice. She knew the voice of Jesus.

Jesus had really risen. And it changed everything for her. She was upset. And now she is filled with joy. And for us here this morning who know Jesus as our risen Savior, maybe we remember the time before we came to know him.

The time when we realized we were sinful. We were dead in our sin. We knew we were lost and hopeless and helpless. But then it's like Jesus calls us by name.

[22:18] Calls us to know him for ourselves. To know the risen Savior. And there is so much joy in that as we realize we are known and we are loved by the risen Savior, Jesus.

And I love Easter Sunday as I've said a few times now. I love that we get to celebrate together the empty tomb that Jesus has risen.

And I love something else. I wonder if you can guess. Did I hear someone say Easter eggs? Thank you. Yes, Easter eggs. I love chocolate.

I love chocolate. And I am really looking forward after a church lunch to go home and eat all of these. Whoa. That's a lot of chocolate, isn't it?

I'm really excited for that. We'll see, won't we? Mary holds on to Jesus.

[23:21] Mary holds on to Jesus for herself. And we know that because of what Jesus says in verse 17. Do not hold on to me.

Do not hold on to me all for yourself. Jesus has risen. Has risen for Mary.

But it's not just for Mary. And you'll see if I'm serious in a moment about those Easter eggs. I'll send her and the rest of you. She holds on to Jesus.

She doesn't want Jesus to go away from her again. But you see, Jesus is saying that I am more than just a teacher, Mary. I am God's.

I know you, yes, but not just you. You are to go and tell others of me. You are to share me with others.

[24:22] So verse 17, it says, Jesus said, Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.

Jesus is going to ascend back into heaven to be in his rightful place at the right hand of his Father. But Jesus says to Mary, My Father can be your Father too. He can be your God. He can be known by you. And you are to go and tell others about this.

Go and tell my brothers, he says. When he says, Go and tell my brothers, he's talking about his disciples. And he talks about them as brothers because they can now, because Jesus has died and has risen again, they can now know Jesus' Father is their father too.

They can know then that Jesus is their brother. Their brother who has gone through death and up from the death, up from the grave.

[25:45] He is risen. They can know and be part of a new family of God. And that's true for us here this morning too. We too can know because of the risen Jesus, God is our father.

Jesus is our brother. I don't know what experience of family you've had. Some of us may have had good experiences of family, good experiences of a father.

They're a blessing to us. Some of us may have known really hard experiences of family, hard experiences of a father. But know this. Knowing God as your father is great, great news.

A father who loves us so much, who will forgive us of all our sins, who won't ever let us go, won't ever abandon us. And this is all possible because of the risen Jesus who truly does change everything.

And so Mary is told not to hold on to Jesus for herself. She's told to go and share this news with others. And so although I am excited for Easter eggs, I am excited to eat chocolate.

[27:04] This isn't just for me. This will be available to people, probably out by the tea and coffee later for people to take. But as you take an egg, remember they're being shared with you.

And remember that Jesus tells Mary not to hold on to her, not to hold on to him for herself, but to go, to go and tell others as she does.

She goes and tells people, I have seen the Lord. He has risen again. You can know Jesus as your savior, as your brother. You can know God as your father.

And we as a church, we've wanted to make sure we share Jesus with others this Easter. And so maybe you've been invited here by someone in your family. Maybe you've received one of these through your door, seen something like this in Preston Pages, handed one of these on the street, because we want to share with you the good news that Jesus has risen.

It is good news, and it's for you to know too. Anyone who comes to know Jesus for themselves, who comes to know their sins forgiven, gets to know life with him.

[28:26] You know what? Life in this world, it has many, many good things. And I think that chocolate is one of the best things. Oh, go on, Julia.

Julia's the first one to get one. Good catch. Chocolate is one of the best things. But life in this world is also hard. It is painful.

It is sad. And there is death. People die. But this morning, we have seen the wonderful surprise of that first Easter morning, that the tomb is empty, that Jesus is risen, that we can know Jesus as our risen Savior, who's died for our sins in our place.

We can know God as our Father, our loving Heavenly Father. He truly is a great uncertain hope in life and death.

He is for Mary. Mary knows Jesus as our hope in life and death. Many in this room do too. And you can know it too.

[29:41] Even this morning, you can pray, God, I've sinned against you. I'm sorry. But I trust in Jesus, the Savior, who has died for me and has

risen again.

Thank you for the new life you give me. You can pray that this morning. Don't leave this place without praying that if you haven't already. We're going to sing a song which speaks of our hope in life and death, our only real certain hope in life and death.

It's found in Jesus, Jesus the risen one. Jesus whose tomb is empty. What is our hope in life and death? It is Christ alone, Christ alone.

This is a newer song, one we've been kind of learning just recently as a church. So those who know it, do sing up and we'll get it, I'm sure.