

Easter Message

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. We all look at things very differently, don't we? I just want to give an example. I've got here a glass with some squash in. Hands up if you would say this glass is half full. Yeah, quite a few. Hands up if you would say this glass was half empty. Yeah, a few as well. One glass of juice with half amount in it, and we see it differently. Well, in our reading today that we've just heard, we heard the account of what happened on the very first Easter morning. A woman named Mary went to visit the tomb. Now, a tomb is another word for a grave, where the body of Jesus had been laid. When she got there, she found that the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. She ran to find someone to tell them what she had seen, and she found two of Jesus' friends, Peter and an unnamed friend, but actually commentators believe it was John. And Mary said to them, they have taken our Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him. The three of them immediately ran to the tomb. When they got there, they all saw the same thing, but they didn't look at it in the same way. Each one looked at it differently, just as we looked at the glass of juice differently. First of all, we have Peter, who looked and was curious. We are told he went into the tomb and looked around. He saw strips of linen laying around and saw the cloth that Jesus had been buried in folded neatly and placed where the body had been. We can imagine Peter's curiosity and him saying to himself, hmm, interesting. Secondly, Mary looked at the tomb and was very sad. We are told that she didn't actually told that she didn't actually go in. She stood outside and wept. She thought someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Thirdly, John looked and believed. We are told that John went into the tomb, he looked around, and yes, he believed. Now, I don't know much, how much John understood of what was going on, but I think he believed that Jesus had risen from the tomb just as Jesus said he would. So three people all saw the empty tomb, the same tomb, but we have three different reactions. One was curious, one was sad, and one believed. And I wonder which reaction you relate to the most today. Are you like Peter and curious about the Easter story?

Perhaps you have some questions like, did Jesus literally, physically rise from the dead? Or was his body stolen from the tomb? Perhaps you're asking, why did Jesus have to die? Or what does this story mean for me? What's it got to do with me? It's okay to have doubts and questions. We don't have to try and abandon them and ignore them, but try to find the intersection of what we hold to be true and what leaves us baffled. We need to claim those questions and doubts as what propel us forward into a better understanding of God, the God we worship. God can handle all our questions and doubts that are a very real part of our faith. Romans chapter 8 verse 39 reminds us that nothing at all can ever separate us from the love of God. No grief, no hurt, no anger, no mistakes, no hardship, no question, or no doubt. In his resurrection, Jesus got rid of every boundary that had the potential to separate us from God, even and especially the boundary of death. This is the good news of the risen Jesus.

Perhaps you relate more to Mary. Mary thinks something valuable and precious has been taken from her. She doesn't realise that Jesus has risen as he said he would. She's experiencing overwhelming loss and grief.

Her weeping is completely understandable. She is upset and confused, stricken by the painful reality that comes with lost hope. Perhaps life and all of its challenges has taken its toll on you. You have come here today hoping to hear the good news of Easter, hoping to be filled and transformed, but actually you struggle to share in the joyful occasion because life is just so hard for you right now.

[5 : 4 6] Perhaps you are held by grief in its many forms and can't see past the empty tomb to the risen Jesus. That's okay. Jesus knows and understands and wants you to come to him as you are, trusting in his deep love and comfort.

He will listen to our burdens and respond with eternal promises, just like he did with Mary on that first Easter morning.

He will meet with each of us. That's the good news of the risen Jesus. Perhaps you relate more to John, who looked at the tomb, saw it was empty and believed.

Life is good. Life is good. You have no major questions or doubts. You believe Jesus is exactly who he says he is. Your spirit is lifted on this special Easter day.

But God has more for you. That's the good news of the risen Jesus. Whether you feel curious like Peter, weeping like Mary or believing John, God wants to remind you, wants to remind all of us that he loves us.

[7 : 05] He sent his son Jesus to die on the cross and then to rise again out of his great love for us. He has a good plan and a purpose for each of our lives.

And he invites you to do life with him, just as you are curious, weeping or believing. God wants to lead each and every one of us into a full life with him.

And when we decide to let him lead our lives, it's one decision that we will never regret making.

That's the good news of the risen Jesus.

Let's pray. We thank you, Lord, for your amazing love for us. Thank you that Christ is risen, which proves that tragedy is turned into triumph.

Defeat is turned into victory. Evil is turned into good. And hopelessness is turned into hope.

[8 : 14] Please help us all here today to know the risen Lord today and always. Amen.

Amen. Amen.