

He is not Here!

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[0 : 00] No news is good news, or so they say. I've never really known what to make of that statement,! No news is good news. First, in a situation where you're expecting to hear bad news, to hear no news is a good thing. It means that the bad news you were expecting hasn't happened. Or secondly, it could mean that there is no such thing as good news, that all news is bad. And I guess we could take it both ways, especially if we're of a melancholic mindset. We've become so used to bad news that good news comes as somewhat of a shock to all of us, especially if that news isn't just good, but great. And our message this Easter Sunday morning is the best of all news.

Now, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, these three ladies, didn't come to the tomb of Jesus on the first day of that week expecting good news. They came to anoint the body of Jesus, they came to weep over him and to share in one another's grief.

Little did they expect the announcement of the glory of God. Little did they expect to hear the best news news ever made known to humankind. Little did they expect to hear the words of an angel.

He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. For them, all news that day was good news.

All too often in the emotions of our hearts, the attitudes of our minds and the bearing of our bodies, we live as though Jesus had not risen from the dead. We live as though there is no good news and that we have never heard or believed the best news of all. That Jesus Christ has triumphed over the grave and is alive forevermore and that in his life we have the forgiveness of our sins and eternal peace with God. The announcement of the angel here in Mark chapter 16 and verse 6 changes not just that world forever, it changes my world forever, it changes my world forever, your world forever, because it means that we too can live in joy, in hope, and in love. The angel calls out from that empty tomb, he has risen, he is not here.

[2 : 57] He is here. See the place where they laid him. And in these words we have the best news we could ever hear. News, first of all, of glory and then of truth and then of victory. With the eyes of our hearts for a short while this morning, let's enter into that tomb of Jesus and hear the words of this angel and learn to live in the light of the resurrection life and glory of Jesus. These, in verse 6, are first of all words of glory. They're words of glory. I'd ask you to think of how these three faithful women must have felt on that first day of the week. Just hours before they had watched their Saviour and Lord being cruelly tortured and then nailed to a cross. They had stood beside Jesus' mother and they had shared in her pain of losing her son. All their hopes had been dashed as they watched Jesus being hurriedly wrapped in grave clothes and his body being placed in a tomb. And they must have wondered to themselves, where is God in all of this?

Where is God in all of this? Why didn't God intervene to save Jesus from the cruelty and malice of men? Now they didn't have the benefit of hindsight like we do and so their hearts must have been pierced through by the end of what they saw as God's saving plans for his people. God's Messiah was dead.

Their loving and beloved master buried in the tomb and God, if I may say with all reverence, was nowhere to be seen. There was no evidence of the steadfast love or sovereign power of God at the cross of Jesus. But now these three women hear these words, He has risen. The actual verb used here is in its passive voice. He has been raised.

It may be difficult to see God at work at the cross, but only God could have been at work in the empty tomb. Only God could have raised the dead body of His Son. The overriding atmosphere on the cross was one of gloom.

The overriding atmosphere of the empty tomb was one of glory. For here, in a way never seen before, God was at work. I hope we can see and grasp this perspective of the angel's announcement and its dramatic impact upon these three women and the world ever since. The God who seemed absent at the cross worked powerfully on the third day to raise His Son from the dead. The messianic hope of salvation through Christ, which seemed to die with Him on the cross, now rises with Him from the tomb.

[6 : 23] The glory of God is in this place, powerfully resurrecting Jesus from the dead. All that Christ promised to give His people, forgiveness, new birth, eternal life, all that seemed to be nailed to the cross with Jesus. It's now alive. And God is powerfully working. Can you imagine how these women must have felt, confused perhaps, but for the first time in many days, their grief had been punctured by glory.

We live in a world where at times, and if we're not looking with spiritual eyes, God seems to be absent. The church is attacked on every side, intellectually, morally, yes, even physically. God seems to be letting it happen. The kingdom of God we pray for seems further and further away. The vindication of Christ and His gospel is a hope falling behind the horizon of human animosity.

But listen again to the angel's announcement. He has risen. Let's sear these words with a cattle brand into our hearts. The glory of God has punctured this world's gloom, and the power of God has overcome.

All that Christ died and rose to give us is ours, and it's sure and certain. Despite all appearances to the contrary, God's glory is not falling behind the horizon. It is rising higher than the sun.

The salvation promises of God, His salvation, His forgiveness, His new birth, His eternal life, are powerfully and lovingly offered today, and secured to us through the risenness of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 32] Whatever seems to be today is not really what is. God's kingdom keeps on coming and keeps on growing, and all because of these words spoken at the empty tomb of Jesus by the angel. He has risen.

These are words of glory. These are also words of truth. These are words of truth. Now, Scottish people like me aren't known for our optimism. It would be out of character for us to only ever talk good things. My grandfather used to say famously to me, boy, it's either raining or it's going to rain.

Now, here's the question for us. Does this mean that the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is mere optimism is mere optimism? Is it a fanciful dream, something we wish was true, in the same way that we wish there was a real Easter Bunny? Is it mere optimism to follow a risen Christ and to hope in Him? Now, the angel's not speaking here to 21st century Scottish people, but to 1st century Jews, but still he wants to ground the physical resurrection of Jesus not in the realm of fantasy and myth, not in the realm of tradition, not in the realm of hope, but in the realm of fact, truth, and history.

He says to these three women, he is not here. He has risen. He is moving the locus of his announcement toward the realm of fact, truth, and history. He is not here. It's a statement of evidentiary value.

It's a truth claim which we can test and check. The physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the cardinal and basic foundation of the Christian faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, our faith is meaningless and foolish. If Jesus is still in the tomb, then the universe has no meaning and there is no God.

[10 : 58] And yet the arguments for the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead are more powerful than the arguments for the existence of God Himself or for the effectiveness of prayer. In reality, the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection on that third day is the foundation for every aspect of our Christian faith.

It grounds our faith in reason, history, fact, truth. Because Jesus rose from the dead, all He said is true.

Because Jesus rose from the dead, He is Savior and Lord. I went through a time in my life when I was afflicted by all manner of atheistic doubts.

I stopped believing in God. But it was the historicity, the truth, and the factuality of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which brought me back. The rationality of the resurrection trumped the terror of the tomb. The entire existence of our universe rests on one historic, the historically verifiable fact. But on this first day of the week, Jesus rose from the dead.

In an age where reason and rationality plays second fiddle to heart, emotions, and feelings, we need to reckon with this greatest truth in all of history. He's not here. He is not here.

[12 : 47] Check it out for yourself. Deal with the objections to the historicity of the resurrection. One by one, and you are left with this greatest of all truths. Jesus Christ rose on the third day.

And it's this fundamental truth of the resurrection of Jesus which forms the foundation for every other truth in our world. So we study the science of a world in which Jesus rose from the dead and in which he is speaking today. This isn't mindless optimism. This is certain fact. It is the best attested fact in all of history. They say that no news is good news. It's not true. It's not true. The good news that Jesus has risen from the dead establishes and certifies the truthfulness of the Christian faith. It assures us that all Christ said is true. And all the benefits of the Christ said is true. And all the benefits of salvation, forgiveness, new birth, eternal life, they are ours through faith in him. Where's the need for a hang dog expression? An universe in which

Jesus rose from the dead. Melancholy be gone. Despair be gone. Jesus is not here. Glory, truth, and third, these are words of victory. These are words of victory. They are words of victory. Jesus has risen to new life, an extinguishable, eternal, glorious. This is not the greatest of all news. It means that no matter how much hatred and malice he suffered, he overcame it all. Listen to the words of the angel.

See where they laid him. See where they laid him. Now, in a sense, of course, it was Jesus' followers, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who placed him in the tomb. But in a more meaningful sense, others laid him there, those who crucified him, those who killed him. But by his resurrection, he has overcome them all and now reigns in triumph over them all and over all his enemies. Jesus is the victor from whom no one took life and to whom no one gave life. He was victorious over at least three groups. In the first instance, through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus was victorious over the hatred and opposition of our world. The world and all its rebellion against God hated Christ. He was the light who came into the darkness, but the darkness wanted to stay dark. The world hated the graciousness of the gospel offer that it's by simple faith in Christ a person is saved. The world hated his righteous understanding of the law. But the heart of a person's piety is the piety of a person's heart.

And so they rejected Jesus and they mocked Jesus and they tortured Jesus and they crucified Jesus. And they do the same, the very same to Jesus' followers today. But see the victory of Jesus?

[16 : 36] Jesus, he overcomes the hatred of the world with his loving, powerful resurrection from the dead. He is victorious over this world's hatred and he triumphs over this world's terrors.

In the second instance, through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus was victorious over death death and the fear of death. The Bible tells us as it is. It is appointed once for men to die.

Unless Jesus comes first, we shall all die and we shall lie in the tomb. And such a thought terrifies the doubt, the apprehension, fear, the despair. Death laid Jesus in the tomb.

The nails driven into his hands, the breath leaving his lungs. And death, like a mighty ocean, thought it had overwhelmed Jesus and drowned him in the deep. Look where death laid Jesus, in a garden tomb. But see the triumph of Jesus, for he has defeated death and the grave with his loving, powerful resurrection from the dead. Jesus is victorious over death.

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[19:02] Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Look where the condemnation of our sins laid Jesus in the tomb.

But see the triumph of Jesus, for he has endured the condemnation of our sins, and he has overcome the condemnation of our sins by his loving, powerful resurrection from the dead.

It's the vindication of his sacrifice and his righteousness. He is victorious over our sins, and in his resurrection he triumphs over them all. Is it true that no news is good news?

Sometimes, but not when it comes to the gospel, for the news isn't just good for us today, it is great. The good news of Jesus is glory and truth and victory.

Tombs are places of grief, but Jesus makes his tomb a place of glory. Tombs are places of terror, but Jesus makes his tomb a place of truth.

[20 : 18] Tombs are places of fear, but Jesus makes his tomb a place of victory. Good news, great news, and it's all for us. For in the resurrection of Jesus through faith in him, we too are raised to new life.

A new life of glory and truth and victory. Let's live in the announcement of the angel and the reality of the resurrection.

But perhaps this morning, you're not yet a Christian. This is the first time you've ever been confronted with the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.

It is hard for you to take in. I understand that. You've never heard anything like this before. But for all that it's hard to believe, let me assure you, it is true.

And that as a result of the resurrection of Jesus, nothing can ever be the same again. Not for the world and not for you. It means that the world which really is, is different from the world we know.

[21 : 28] We live in the realm and in the age of the resurrection of Jesus. Surely the reality of this Easter Sunday morning with its message of the resurrection of Jesus means that our lives can never be the same again.

That we simply must respond to the living Jesus in faith and trust. The apostle Paul, an early follower of Jesus, says, If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. This morning as a result of all you have heard, are you willing to do that very thing?

To confess the living Jesus as Lord of all things, and to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Are you willing to believe the best of all you, the good news of the gospel?

Are you? Are you?