

Easter Sunday

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[0 : 00] Happy Easter everyone. You remember my name, thank you. Have you ever waited for anything? I hate waiting.

Waiting to hear a result of some tests from the doctor, waiting for exam results, waiting for the result of a job interview, waiting for the birth of your first child. I've been in all those situations, and they can be worrying times.

I can remember getting the envelope for my GCE results. Remember, GCE, not GCSE, shows my age. My hands were trembling.

I knew I was going to do terribly. I opened, and in case you were wondering, the past two, English and religious knowledge. So there you are. I'm sure you all have had similar experiences.

So today, I want you to think for a moment that you are those disciples back on that first Easter Sunday, or rather on that first Easter Saturday, which we never hear much about, leading to Easter Sunday, waiting in a room, wondering what was going to happen next.

[1 : 05] You're a mixed lot of people, men and women, all Jews. And if you had given up your livelihoods, to follow this man, Jesus. A man who spoke as never anyone had spoken before.

This Jesus spoke to women as if they were real people. He treated everyone the same, tax collectors and sinners. A man who healed people, and even raised people from the dead.

A man who said he was come to bring about a new kingdom. A new kingdom of God. A new kingdom of heaven. Jesus, who claimed to know God, as no man had ever known him. This man who said he was the son of God.

This man who you had seen suffering a most cruel, inhumane death. The death of a criminal on a cross. A death Jesus predicted, but which you did not believe.

This Jesus was lying in a borrowed tomb, apparently abandoned by God. His enemies had won. Satan was triumphant. Evil had won over good. They were huddled together, scared, wondering about Jesus and his promises.

[2 : 04] Was it all a mistake? Was Jesus one of the many men who claimed to be who they were not? Could the Messiah die on the cross and be buried in the tomb? And God died. For us to recognize the reality of that first Easter day, we need to realize the depths to which these disciples must have sunk.

The darkness they were in, despair that they felt as the one who followed and loved was dead and buried. That first Sunday after Good Friday, not a happy day to begin with.

But, 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. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the men bound down with their faces to the ground. The men said to them, why do you look for the living among the dead?

These women were going to the tomb of Jesus, fully expecting to find him there, dead. Not going to the tomb expecting a resurrection, but rather to complete the burial ritual. They had to wait all through Easter Saturday, their Sabbath, before they could do this.

[3 : 08] And the angels asked the women, why do you look for the living among the dead? Then, it seemed a stupid question. They had seen Jesus carrying his cross with a crown of thorns, with nails in his hands and feet, with a spear stuck in his side.

They had seen darkness come over the whole land until the ninth hour and the sun stopped shining. The curtain of the temple was torn in two. They heard Jesus say, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And into your hands I commit my spirit and it is finished. They had seen Jesus taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb across which a heavy stone had been rolled.

No wonder the women thought they were going to see a dead body which required to be covered with spices as their custom was. When they got to the tomb they met these men who asked, why do you look for the living among the dead?

An historic question which said, in effect, Jesus was not dead but alive and the men underlined this by saying, he's not here, he is risen. Remember how he told you that while he was still with you in Galilee, the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.

[4 : 12] Then the women remembered his words. The women ran back to the others and told the disciples what had happened. They didn't believe them or what men are like because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

However, we read that Peter and John and we read about John running with Peter in John's Gospel they ran to the tomb. It was only when John looked into the tomb and saw the linen and burial cloth folded by itself that he believed.

But why? At that time there was a real problem with grey rubbers who would destroy tombs, move ceiling stones and take bodies. Mary may have thought that the Jews had taken the body so it's no wonder that Mary Magdalene came running to the disciples and said they've taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have put him.

When John looked in the tomb and saw the linen which had spices on them which the robber would have taken and the burial cloth which was folded because it was no longer needed he knew that Jesus was alive. John had seen Lazarus come from the tomb wearing his grave clothes and the tomb of Jesus clothes were there as if Jesus had just passed from them.

John knew that the only explanation of these grave clothes was that Jesus who had given him charge of his mother Jesus had been crucified Jesus who had been buried in his new tomb this Jesus had risen from the dead as the scriptures had foretold in Psalms it says because you will not abandon me to the grave nor will you let your holy one see decay Isaiah says for he bore the sin of many made intercession for the transgressors and Hosea Hosea said after two days he will revive us and on the third day he will restore us that we may live in his presence Jesus had risen from the dead he was alive when we read the stories of the resurrection appearance there seems to be a pattern those who saw Jesus are overcome with emotion Mary with grief disciples with fear Thomas with doubt then the risen Christ appears to them in the midst of their grief fear and doubt and as a result of that meeting with Jesus they are transformed Mary to mission told the disciples I have seen the Lord disciples with joy and Thomas with faith

[6 : 11] Jesus is alive there are three events in the life of Jesus shapes every Christian the birth of Jesus is incarnation God coming to live amongst us in flesh and blood the death of Jesus on the cross where Jesus God incarnate died for our sins the resurrection of Jesus the fact that the tomb is empty Jesus rose from the dead and he is alive the message of Easter is not to do with eggs or bunnies or holidays the message is that Jesus is alive the message of Easter is one of hope darkness there is light despair hope and the defeat victory I listened to a mother who had lost her only two daughters at Hillsborough if you remember a terrible tragedy a football match where over 90 people died that was many years ago she said they drove up to Hillsborough as a family they drove back as a couple and just this week I saw a programme about Jason Watkins who's a very good actor his wife Clara had lost their two year old daughter

Maudie sepsis we do read of the despair that Ukrainians are going through at the moment and continue to go through and have gone through over the last 12 months or through so where was God in all of this well he was on the cross he was in the tomb he suffered and he died so that it would be a new creation so that when Jesus comes back there will be no more tears God will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain the old order of things has passed away Jesus dying on the cross dealt with sin despair death and resurrection brings hope and joy the abundance of God's love had and continues to overcome the enormity of godliness and evil in this world Jesus who once was dead is the living one Jesus is alive he's conquered death Jesus is alive our sins can be forgiven Jesus is alive we can know his presence every day Jesus is alive he can guide us in the way we should go Jesus is alive he can be with us during the good times he knows what it is to celebrate

Jesus is alive he can be with us during the bad times he knows what it is to suffer a song I was listening to the other day an old gospel type song and it just says that God reached down he reached down and he touched pain God knows what pain's like because he was separated from his son Jesus knows what pain's like because he was separated from his father so Jesus or the father through his spirit can touch our pain wherever we have it so let us not though look for the living Jesus among the dead things of this world wealth ambition and all other worldly idols let us look for Jesus among the living let us start with one another we're all brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus lives in each one of us let us respect and love one another because Jesus is alive in us let's do good and kind and nice things to one another this morning I was reading Sylvia I'm not a very good driver I bashed into something and Sylvia fell out of the wheelchair yes you did and three kind

Samaritans helped me put her back in that chair and I praise God and bless God for the help of those people and let us be people who are kind loving one another because Jesus lives in us by his spirit in doing that we can be the body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit the world that so desperately needs him be that Christian community which is the worldly shape and presence of Christ those people who still live in their Easter Saturdays in their tombs of sin despair and hopelessness who have not experienced an Easter Sunday remember a long time ago at a spring harvest someone was speaking about a gospel preacher the basic sermon was it's Friday Sunday's coming it's Friday Sunday's coming we all have had Fridays in our lives dark days when we've been down wondered what was going on feeling depressed none of us would have felt like Jesus on Good Friday we were separated from his father with whom he had been one eternity it's Friday for Jesus

Sunday Easter Sunday the resurrection has come back it can be Sunday for us so where is God he's here he's with us by the spirit as he's community on earth we are to be Jesus to the world so as with those first disciples that met with Jesus let us be like Mary the missionaries and saviour to see the Lord and tell people about him let us like Thomas have faith and turn to search Jesus and say my Lord and my God let us like the disciples be glad full of joy because Jesus is alive the empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus are the two main parts of the gospel stories of the resurrection they both mean one thing Jesus is alive God's not dead no he is alive Christ is not dead no he is alive Christ is risen hallelujah everywhere Jesus is just verse why are healing he is you and and all and you are your you are you are your thumb oh

[11 : 37] God