

# EASTER SUNDAY - The King is Dead - Long Live the King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, please take a seat. Let's see if you remember. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. I saw a few people going, he is risen indeed. Let's try that just one more time. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Oh, you guys are brilliant. Well done. Now, I thought I'd start this morning with some famous lines. I'll start them and you see if you can finish them. The first one is from Shakespeare. To be or not to be, that is... I didn't even get to finish my part. I think we've got a picture of Shakespeare. That's right. Well done. Okay, next slide. This one is from... This might be a bit younger for some other people, but the next slide, Tina. Okay, this one's from Arnie. I'll be back. Back, yeah, easy. Okay. This one is a little bit older.

[ 1 : 00 ] Well, may we say God save the Queen because nothing will save the Governor-General. Yeah, well done. All right, how about this famous Telstra? Not happy Jan.

Now, we have a Jan here this morning and she's nothing like that unreliable Jan. She's very reliable. I know her well. Last one. This one doesn't have a slide, but I hope you know it. We believe in Jesus Christ who suffered under... ..was... ..died and was... ..and on the third day he...

...was to him. I'm so glad you knew that one. Those last lines are, of course, from the Apostles' Creed. And as we come to the last...

Well, I want to kind of summarize the last two chapters because that's really the Easter story of Mark's Gospel. The last two chapters can pretty much be broken up according to those lines from the Apostles' Creed.

[ 1 : 56 ] And I've tried to show it in your outlines if you've got those inserts there. Now, so far, we've actually looked at the first two points on the outline. We looked at those on Good Friday.

And while we'll focus on the resurrection today, it's important that Christ's crucifixion is not far away because it's the two events together that ensure our salvation.

And so let me very briefly remind you of what we've seen so far if you weren't here on Good Friday. Firstly, we saw Jesus suffer under Pontius Pilate. And as we saw him suffer under Pontius Pilate and the mock trial and so on, we saw also a surprising silence.

Silence from Jesus when he was falsely being accused. And that silence is surprising because whenever we are falsely accused, it's split seconds before we defend ourselves, isn't it?

We defend ourselves very quickly. It wasn't me. Not my fault. No, no. It wasn't me. But Jesus is silent. As Andrew reminded us on Good Friday, he's like the servant of Isaiah 53 who is silent before his shearers, so to speak.

[ 3 : 03 ] And as he takes the place of Barabbas, a sinner. And then we also saw point number two, Jesus crucified and die. And there we heard two surprising declarations.

The first one was a curtain being torn in two. And by doing so, God was declaring the way open to him for all people.

And it's surprising because, well, quite frankly, curtains don't normally tear themselves, do they? It was a surprising declaration. And the second surprising declaration was from what Andrew pointed out, the pagan Gentile soldier.

Not a Jew, not one of his disciples, but it was a Gentile soldier who declared Jesus to be the Son of God. That's what we've seen so far, but the story, of course, has not ended, nor have the surprises. In fact, one of the big surprises, in Mark's gospel at least, is the ending of his gospel. So if you've got those sheets of paper there, have a look at verse number eight for a moment. This is how Mark

actually ends his gospel, his book.

[ 4 : 04 ] Verse number eight, trembling and bewildered, chapter 16, verse eight, trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Now that's a surprising ending, is it not? I mean, where are the women telling the disciples that Jesus is alive? For that matter, where is Jesus? Where is the joy that the disciples have when they realize it is true that he is alive?

Instead, Mark ends on a note of fear. In fact, this ending is so surprising that some scribes who used to copy down, they didn't have photocopiers, remember? So scribes used to copy out all the manuscripts. Some scribes, it seems, actually added a few extra verses.

It was so surprising an ending. Those verses we do have there, it's verses nine to 20, and here they say things like verse 10, where the women go and tell the disciples.

And they add verses 12 to 14, where Jesus appears to the disciples. They also add verse 15, where Jesus commands to share the gospel to all nations, and so on. Now, while some of these things are told in the other gospels, almost every Bible scholar agrees that verses nine to 20 are not part of Mark's original book, not part of his gospel.

[ 5 : 21 ] And so in the NIV translation, which you have before you, you have these words in brackets, which says, the most reliable and early manuscripts in some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16, verses nine to 20.

You see, the ending in verse eight was so surprising that scribes added to it. But if verse eight is Mark's true ending, then why does he end on a note of fear?

Well, before we answer that question and unpack that surprising ending, there's some other surprises we meet first. So come back with me to the beginning of the passage, or at least to chapter 15, verse 42, where we pick up Mark's Easter story again from Good Friday.

On your outlines, we've covered points one and two on Good Friday. So up to point three, Jesus was buried and descended to the dead. Verse 42, it was preparation day, that is the day before the Sabbath.

So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the council who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body.

[ 6 : 24 ] Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.

So Joseph brought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, saw where he was laid.

You see, here we read that Pilate is surprised that Jesus has already died. And just to be sure, he gets a centurion who is well trained in the art of death to check. And so it's not as some people claim that Jesus simply fainted on the cross.

Some people try and explain the resurrection as Jesus fainted on the cross, he went into the tomb, you know, recovered a bit and then let himself out. So it wasn't a real resurrection. Didn't happen, did it?

Centurions knew what they were doing. Jesus was truly dead. And upon his death, Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus's body so he can bury it. Now this is a bold request because if you were tried for treason, which Jesus was, I mean, he's claiming to be king, if you're tried for treason, then Roman law said you had to be humiliated after death.

[ 7 : 38 ] Andrew told us a bit about this on Good Friday. That is, your body was not allowed to be buried immediately, but it had to be left on the cross to rot and decay a bit. And so to ask for Jesus's body was to go against Roman law, you see.

It was a bold request. Of course, Pilate knew of Jesus's innocence and so he grants this request anyway. Yet the surprising thing about the request is the person who made it.

For he was not a member of the family, nor was he one of the twelve disciples. Instead, he was a prominent member of the council or the Sanhedrin, the very ones who all agreed in chapter 15, verse 1, to kill Jesus.

But here he is boldly asking to bury the body, which is somewhat surprising if he agreed with the rest of the council to have Jesus killed in the first place. However, it seems that Joseph had been a

little undecided about Jesus.

You see, we read here that Joseph had been waiting for the kingdom of God. And in John chapter 19, which is up on the screen, it says here that he was a disciple of Jesus in secret.

[ 8 : 44 ] He was a secret disciple. And not that he was one of the twelve disciples, nor that he was necessarily a true believer. After all, he was part of the Sanhedrin who agreed to have Jesus killed. Rather, it seems he secretly followed Jesus around because he was intrigued by what Jesus had to say concerning the kingdom of God.

But now, by boldly requesting the body, it's as though he openly declares his allegiance to Jesus. It's as though he now decides which side he is on and in so doing risks his prominent standing with the rest of the council.

And I wonder if we can learn something from Joseph here. I wonder if this type of boldness is worth copying or emulating ourselves. You know, not fearing what others think, but being willing to openly declare our allegiance to Christ.

Well, Joseph, with some help, wraps and buries the body, even though it says he did this and he did this. We know from John 19 that he had at least Nicodemus' help to wrap the body.

So he wraps the body with some help and as the creed says, Jesus descended to the dead. That is, he rested with the dead. He was buried. But the next great line of the creed is, on the third day, Jesus, I've got two people with me, Jesus rose from the dead.

[ 10 : 06 ] That's right. Which brings us to point four and chapter 16. Have a look there at chapter 16 verses one to five. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, after the Sabbath had ended, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. And as they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in white, a white robe sitting on the right side and they were alarmed.

Here, the women have a surprising encounter, don't they? In fact, it's a little bit more than surprising. It says there they were alarmed. Instead of finding a stone-covered tomb with a body in it, they find the large stone removed and the tomb empty apart from this man dressed in white. Now, the other Gospels tell us that this man in white was an angel and the word angel simply means messenger. And so, what is his message? Well, verse 6, don't be alarmed, he said.

[ 11 : 12 ] You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him? But go, tell his disciples and Peter he is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. Now, this Jesus who was crucified has risen. That's the message. Now, this is not a case of mistaken identity, please note.

It's not as though these women got the wrong tomb, for example. For these women were the ones who saw Jesus crucified. The very first verse of our reading, chapter 15, verse 40. They're the same ones who in chapter 15, verse 47 saw where Jesus was laid.

And it's these same women who now go to the tomb in chapter 16. They've got the right tomb. In fact, even the angel emphasizes it's the same Jesus who died that has now risen from the dead. You see verse 6 again? He says, you're looking for Jesus the Nazarene, the one from Nazareth, the one who was crucified. Well, it's that same Jesus who has risen. It's not a case of mistaken identity, you see.

[ 12 : 20 ] Back in the year 1422, in France, Charles VII took the throne from his father. And when he did so, a senior official in France cried out, pardon my French, Le Roy es mort, vive le Roy.

I'm sorry, Joy, who speaks French. That's terrible, I know. But you know what it means, don't you? The king is dead, long live the king.

And from that time on, it was often used at the succession of kings in both France and England. Of course, the phrase was talking about an old king who had died and a new king who took his place. But here, it's the same person. Jesus of Nazareth, the king who was crucified, is the same person who is alive. And Jesus is no longer confined to a tomb.

Indeed, instead he is risen, unleashed from death, so to speak, to be lord of everyone, everywhere. I mean, dead people don't normally rise, do they? But God raises Jesus to new life and in so doing

declares that Jesus is no normal person.

[13:24] Indeed, he is the Lord, the Christ, the king of all people in all places. What's more, Jesus' resurrection also proves his death paid for our sins. You see, anyone can say, oh, I'll die for your sins and you'll be forgiven and then they can actually die.

But how do you know that what they said came true? How do you know your sins have actually been paid for? Well, Jesus proves it by also saying, oh, well, I'm going to rise from the dead as well. And then he actually rises from the dead. And so if he was telling the truth about rising from the dead, something that no one had ever done before, then we can be certain he was telling the truth about paying for our sins at the cross.

He defeated death, which is the consequence of sin. We know we can be forgiven because of his death and resurrection, you see. And what's more, because he has been raised from death to life, then we can be certain he will raise us, our mortal bodies, from death to life.

You see, our hope of heaven is now certain because of the resurrection. These are just some of the implications of Jesus' resurrection and they're huge. Please don't let your familiarity with them take away from how big they are.

[14:36] These implications that come from Jesus' resurrection are of eternal consequence. They're massive. Now, obviously, for some people, it's hard to believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

As I said, dead people don't normally rise again. And so some people say that if you believe in a resurrection, then, well, that's just blind faith. Have you ever heard people say that? It's blind faith. There's no reason or evidence to your faith.

But the thing is, there are actually good reasons, good evidence to believe. And I want to remind you of just one of these reasons to believe in the resurrection. And that reason is the change in the disciples.

As I said, these disciples, they fled Jesus when he was arrested. It was the women who stayed strong and stuck with Jesus. And John tells us that these disciples were locked in an upper room for fear of the Jews.

They were afraid of what the Jews might do next. And so what made these bunch of scared disciples suddenly proclaim Jesus in front of the very ones who had Jesus killed only weeks later?

[15:44] What was it that changed their behavior and their minds so much so that they were willing to give their life for Jesus? Well, they say it was the resurrection, seeing Jesus alive.

In 1984, a leading German historian, Dr. Lapid, writes, as a non-Christian, he writes this, and I think the quote's on the screen. Thanks, Tina. It says, how was it possible that his disciples, who by no means excelled in intelligence or eloquence or strength of faith, were able to begin their victorious march of conversion?

And he says, in a purely logical analysis, the resurrection of Jesus is the lesser of two evils. In other words, he's saying that you either have to admit, based on the evidence, that the resurrection of Jesus is logical or go for an illogical answer.

See what he's saying? He's saying the evidence is there and it's so much so that the resurrection makes most sense. It's the most rational explanation for the change in their behavior. He doesn't want to believe it, of course, and so he calls it the lesser of two evils.

But the point is, even historians, even non-Christian historians, admit there is good reason, good evidence to believe in the resurrection. Now there are more reasons, but the point is, we don't have blind faith.

[17:10] We have exactly the type of evidence you'd expect if Jesus rose from the dead. And that's because, well, he did rise from the dead. And the women are to go and tell the disciples, and particularly Peter, who must be feeling quite bad about denying Jesus three times, that Jesus will be with them soon.

He will meet them in Galilee just as he told them. And here we come to the rather surprising ending to Mark's book and to our journey that I mentioned at the start. See verse 8 again? Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb.

They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid. Now, it all seems a bit too much for these women, doesn't it? I mean, there's surprise after surprise, isn't there? At first, the stone is no longer in place, and then the body of Jesus is missing, and instead, there's a young man dressed in white saying he's alive, it's a lot to take in, isn't it?

No wonder, in verse 8, they left trembling and bewildered. Two years ago, I went to a dance concert for my two girls. I think I've got a photo of them just to show you what they were dressed up like. They're the two on your left. And the night was absolutely manic. There was little girls running around everywhere. There was costume changes and things like that. There was hairspray. I walked through coughing and spluttering because the air was clogged with hairspray, and then when I found out the total cost of the night, I left trembling and bewildered.

[18:38] I haven't been back since. That's enough. Thanks, Tina. Of course, for the women who knew their Old Testaments, there was something else that might have terrified them.

You see, in our first reading from Daniel, it talks about the resurrection of all people to judgment. Some will go to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt. And so for these women, resurrection was associated with judgment day.

And Jesus' resurrection certainly signals that, as I think Daniel, the book of Daniel suggests. But we also know that judgment day has been held off for a time, times a time, in Daniel language.

It's as though God has hit the pause button on the remote so that people will have more time to hear the good news of Jesus and be saved. But he won't hold off forever. The day is coming when Jesus will hold us all accountable for what we have done.

And the resurrection signals this, as I said. And if you don't believe in Jesus, if you don't trust in him to save you from judgment, then you won't be saved from judgment.

[19:43] Of course, the good news is that Jesus died to save us if we would believe in him. Now, for those women, sorry, for those of us who do believe in Jesus, I've heard preachers say at this point that the women actually got it wrong here because they went away and didn't say anything and they were afraid whereas we should go and tell everyone about Jesus with great joy and things like that.

Now, it is true we are to be joyful. It is true we are to take opportunities to speak about Jesus but I don't think the women got it wrong here. I don't think they got it wrong here.

You see, Mark seems to always paint women in a positive light. They get it right while it's the disciples who get it wrong. For example, it's the disciples who flee Jesus while these women stay around.

And so after presenting such a positive picture of women it would seem a little odd for Mark now to give a negative picture. More than that though, we know from the other Gospels that while these women didn't say anything to anyone on the way they did go to the disciples and tell them just as the angel told them to do.

More than that, even the disciples were to wait in Jerusalem before going out and preaching the Gospel, they were to wait for the Holy Spirit the day of Pentecost. And so I don't think the women got it wrong here.

[21:00] But that still leaves us with the surprising ending, doesn't it? Why does Mark end on a note of fear? Why not joy? Well, I think it's because fear is the response you have when you glimpse Jesus' true identity as God, the Son.

And we've seen this time and time again reading Mark's Gospel, haven't we? When people glimpse Jesus' divinity, his God-likeness, they are afraid. Remember when Jesus calms the storm, the disciples think they're about to die and then after he calms the storm, it says that the disciples were terrified, not of the storm, but of Jesus.

They say, who is this man? And then immediately Jesus goes and heals a demon-possessed man, casts the legion of demons out of the man into the pigs and then the townsfolk come to Jesus and say, get out of here, please leave.

Why? Because they were afraid. And then the woman who was bleeding for 12 years and then Jesus healed her and did what no doctor could do for 12 years, the woman then came to him and she was afraid.

And then when Jesus walks on the water out to the disciples, what were the disciples again? Afraid. You see, every time Jesus does something extraordinary, something God-like and people glimpse it, the response is fear.

[22:18] And so Mark's ending here is entirely in keeping with his account, I think. He ends with this note of fear because the resurrection shows Jesus is no mere man, he is the king who will judge and more than that, he is, as the centurion declared, God the Son.

Mark began his book by declaring that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and he ends his book with the right response to Jesus, who is God the Son. The Apostles' Creed says, we believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who was crucified, died and was buried.

And on the third day he rose again. And so I guess the final question for us is, what are we doing with what we believe? That is, how are we responding to this king who is God?

For example, do we have a healthy fear of him? Don't mishear me, please. I'm not suggesting we need to be scared of Jesus, but do we have a reverent respect for him? For example, what do we fear more?

You know, not having a relaxing long weekend and getting all the jobs done we want to get done or missing out on reading our Bible and serving Jesus? Now, what brings us the most fear if we were to miss out on one or the other?

[ 23 : 33 ] Last year, I read several reports of Christians being persecuted in Vietnam. One reporter interviewed a 12-year-old girl who said this, people threaten and curse us and tell us to stop being Christians.

The police came and forced us to leave our home. I was scared. They threw my sister and me into a truck then pointed a gun at my dad and told him to stop being Christian.

My family has been kicked out of our home and village three times because we are Christians. The report went on to say that they continue to believe and live out that belief.

Why? Because they fear Christ more than persecution just like Joseph of Arimathea did. They seek to serve Christ more than their own comfort. Now, we don't have guns pointed at our heads, of course, but there are lots of subtle ways in which we are tempted to fear what the world thinks more than what Christ thinks.

And it made me wonder whether I'd work a little harder at living a godly life if I feared Christ a little more. You know, if I respected him a little more, if I stood in awe of him a little more.

[ 24 : 47 ] Of course, we are to do this not simply because he is God the Son, though that is reason enough. We're also to do this, serve him in awe and respect above all others because he is God the Son who died for us.

He is the one who died in our place just like he died in the place of Barabbas. He gave his life for us, Barabbases, if you like. It's a plural of Barabbases. Rabbi.

Whatever the case. Jesus died in our place and took the agonizing punishment we deserve. And so we are to serve him not just with reverent fear but also with thankful and joyful hearts.

For this Jesus is both God and King who gave his life for us and rose again. This is the Jesus of Mark's Gospel that we've been looking at. This is the Jesus of the Easter story.

This Easter that's coming to a close. This is the Jesus we believe in. And so what I want to do now is stand and affirm this Jesus we believe in by saying that Apostles' Creed.

[ 25 : 50 ] So would you please stand? Well what do we believe? We believe in God the Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ God's only son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary suffered under Pontius Pilate was crucified died and was buried.

He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit the Holy Apostolic Church the fellowship of the saints the forgiveness of sins the resurrection of the body and life eternal.

Amen. While you remain standing let me pray. Heavenly Father we do thank you for this Easter weekend. We thank you that it's a great time to remember what you have done for us in sending your son to die not only to die but to rise again that we can be certain of forgiveness and eternal life.

[ 27 : 08 ] Father we ask that you might help us to have a healthy fear of him to seek to live in reverent fear of him in awe of him seeking to please him above all others for he gave his life for us and was raised again.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Please remain standing as we sing our final hymn together. This will also be our offertory hymn. It's hymn 167 Yours Be The Glory.

We ask the other times of Jeannie Be The shines to this material