

# Seeing and Believing

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[ 0 : 00 ] And we're going to read these verses that Ian has just put on the screen. We're going to read from verse 42 of Mark chapter 15, and then we're going to read into chapter 16.

And when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he had learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

And Joseph bought a linen shroud and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, saw where he was laid. When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

[ 1 : 22 ] And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb and they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He's not here. See the place where they laid him.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.

And just for a short time, just to think of what we've been reading of that empty tomb, and particularly the emphasis on all the times that we see the word, see or saw in the experience of those who witnessed the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[ 2 : 38 ] It is very appropriate that we do think of the death and resurrection of Jesus this morning. All around the world on this Easter Sunday, there are millions, millions of Christians who are remembering the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and doing so with rejoicing.

Yes, in many ways, it's a very different experience of an Easter Sunday that so many are used to. Empty churches, doing as we're doing this morning, through technology, gathering together in our homes.

But we still echo the greetings that are being heard around the world, that Christ is risen, that truly he is risen. And on this first day of the week, when Jesus rose from the dead, of course, we have to say it should be a regular, a weekly, regular remembering of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

He truly is risen. So we have our Lord's Day, a Sunday, the day that Jesus rose from the dead. And of course, it must be a regular remembering that our Lord and Savior truly is alive.

He truly is risen. And yet we will gather together with the Lord's people around the world. We must be gathered together this morning to think again and to worship God for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

[ 4 : 10 ] Jesus who died. Jesus who rose from the dead. And so by faith, we see and believe that truth.

And this is the good news that we proclaim, yes, at this time of year and, as I say, at all times of the year. This is the good news that gives us that resurrection joy, that resurrection peace, that

resurrection rejoicing, that hope that we have that resurrection brings.

As the Queen has already mentioned, as the Queen has already mentioned, of Easter, that Easter that brings the Lord's people that hope. And certainly amidst all the gloom and crisis that we're living through, the good news that Jesus is risen, that he's alive, has to be proclaimed loudly across the world.

No pandemic can halt the good news of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And I pray that your faith is strengthened through that remembering that the Lord Jesus has risen.

And that your hope in the risen Lord Jesus is strengthened, that your love, your faith in him, your love in the risen Lord Jesus is affirmed. And that surely should give you a true and proper perspective of what's happening in this world at the moment.

[ 5 : 36 ] Because by faith, you see the Lord Jesus. You see the risen Lord Jesus. And by faith, you know him. By faith, you follow him.

And you who are united to Christ, by faith, you can testify to the world around that you see Jesus, that you see him with your eyes of faith.

And certainly in normal circumstances, as I say, we'd be together in our church building. We'd be rejoicing collectively in the resurrection of Jesus. But we can still rejoice collectively.

We can still rejoice in fellowship and in worship one with another. This is good news that we share. This is good news of our risen Savior. And we do see that risen Savior.

And we rejoice that he is alive forevermore. And so in this particular aspect of seeing Jesus and believing on him, we're going to focus our thoughts this morning on these words that we read in Mark's Gospel.

[ 6 : 38 ] Particularly as we notice the eyewitness accounts, the eyewitness testimonies of the death and resurrection of Jesus. You know, in any walk of life, if you're going to establish fact and establish truth, then the evidence of eyewitnesses, that evidence is crucial.

You know, you can say of a particular event or a particular situation that you were there. And that you witnessed with your very eyes, you witnessed something that happened. And you can verify the statement about that situation because you were there, you saw it.

And you're telling the truth that nobody can deny. And here in Scripture, God's Word, you can see the verification of truth expressed through eyewitnesses, especially those eyewitnesses who saw the Lord Jesus, who saw him in life, who saw him in death, who saw him as the risen Lord.

John, who wrote his Gospel, John could tell of seeing the Lord Jesus. We have seen his glory, that John said. In fact, later, John would write in his first epistle, 1 John, John would write in three successive verses, he could say these words, we have seen, we have seen, we have seen.

And he sang these words to confirm that Jesus was truly seen in his life, in his death, in his resurrection. Peter and John were proclaiming Jesus.

[ 8 : 14 ] Later, after Jesus had ascended to heaven, Peter and John could tell others that they couldn't but speak of what they had seen and heard of Jesus.

And, you know, when we think of the resurrection of Jesus, then we turn to these eyewitness accounts. They're there for us in Scripture. They're there to help you to see the truth of the resurrection of Jesus.

That truth that tells you of the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And so we're going to look again for our time of worship this morning.

We're going to look again at these eyewitness accounts. And as we do so, to worship the Lord, to see him, to come before him, and to bring him our praise and our thanks that he is at Risen.

And that resurrection of Jesus that guarantees your resurrection to eternal life in Christ. And so Mark's Gospel is there with us, it's before us.

[ 9 : 16 ] And the evidence is there to tell us of the resurrection of Jesus. And he does this. Mark, the Gospel writer, he does things so succinctly in a very sort of clear way.

And he's bringing before us these eyewitnesses, first of all, who saw the death of Jesus, and that death that confirmed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Earlier in Mark chapter 15, we read of the centurion who saw Jesus die. Mark tells us of that in verse 39. Let's read these words.

And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly, this man was the Son of God.

That centurion, that hardened soldier had seen so many people die. He was in no doubt what he saw in the death of Jesus.

[10:16] But then we've got these three women who were eyewitnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They were eyewitnesses in what they saw of Jesus.

Because Mark wants to show us truly Jesus died, truly he was buried, and truly he rose again. All from the evidence of these eyewitness accounts.

And as we said, just the simple word to see and all the various verbal forms of that word see to show us that they truly did, not simply with their eyes, their physical eyes see that Jesus had risen, but with their eyes of faith, they truly could see the Lord and Saviour had risen from the dead.

So let's just bring out what Mark shows us here. We see that in verse 40, chapter 15, verse 40. These three women, three named women, named because in all probability they were still alive when Mark wrote this gospel.

So he's naming them. People could ask them, well, what did you see? And they could tell them what they saw. Mary Magdalene. Then Mary, the mother of James, and the younger one of Joseph.

[11:30] And then the third woman, Salome. Even in Mark, chapter 15, we read that they were already looking on at the cross from a distance. That word looking on, they were literally seeing what happened on the cross.

They could testify that Jesus truly had been put to death, that he truly did die. The centurion confirmed their testimony.

He saw that Jesus had died. And so these women, and indeed the centurion, they were seeing what happened to Jesus right to the very end. And they could tell, they could say that, yes, Jesus truly died.

They saw what happened. They saw it with their own eyes. They confirmed that Jesus had given his life. He didn't just faint in the cross and then somehow revive later.

No. They saw that Jesus truly had died. They were eyewitnesses of the fulfillment of Scripture that Jesus had said before his death that Jesus must die and be raised again.

[12:38] But Jesus had said he must die. Scripture itself confirmed that the Christ, the Messiah, will be that lamb led to the slaughter. But then in chapter 15, verse 47, we're told of the, now two of these women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, were told in verse 47 that they saw which had been laid.

They saw that Jesus truly had been laid in a tomb and that tomb sealed with that very large stone. They saw the place where Jesus' dead body had been laid.

And again, again, this is a sure testimony that Jesus now dead had been placed in a tomb proving beyond doubt that Jesus had died. So these women had seen Jesus die on the cross and they confirmed by their own seeing that yes, Jesus had died, two of these three women had seen where the dead body of Jesus had been laid.

They'd seen that large stone that had been rolled in front of the entrance so that Jesus' body would be sealed within that tomb. But then there's the next statement, the next eyewitness statement that you see in chapter 16, verse 4, where we read, and looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back.

it was very large. We're back to these three women again. The three of them, they've arrived at the tomb, they've arrived at sunrise around about 6am in the morning and they're very downcast.

[14:16] It's the third day since Jesus had died. They'd already seen that heavy stone blocking the entrance to the tomb and now they're coming back that morning, they're coming back, they've returned now with spices.

They think that they're going to anoint Jesus' body. It's as if their hearts are ruling their heads.

How's it going to be possible, they're thinking, they realise, how's it going to be possible to move that heavy stone away to anoint the decaying body of Jesus?

And their heads are down. It just seems a hopeless situation. The Lord and Master is dead. That stone's been blocking their way to the tomb.

Could anything be more dark and despondent to them? But as Mark tells us, the women look up and as they look up, they see.

They see that the stone had been rolled away. And before we move on in the narrative, just let's be reminded about, you know, what to human sense appears hopeless, what to human reasoning alone seems impossible.

[ 15 : 31 ] But with God, all things are possible. With God, the hopeless becomes the hopeful. You know, when the Christians walk with the Lord, there are many times when it appears there are so many hindrances, so many obstacles to our believing in the God who provides.

And we can cry out at times, Lord, why? Why? What good we might cry out? What good is such and such a thing happening in my walk with you? And when you come face to face with what appears to be just impossible times, impossible situations, many of them, maybe a loved one who refuses to turn to the Lord for salvation, or a land, a nation, even such as our own one, that refuses to acknowledge God as Lord, or a world and a society that, you know, tries to remove every trace of God's Word, and even a church whose witness seems so blunt and ineffective.

And even within these times when God calls you to a particular task and you say, Lord, this is impossible. Just reading the other day of one old divine who put it like this when he was commenting on the experience of the women initially in their downcast sense of asking what's going to happen to that heavy stone, he said these words, we conjure up in our imaginations all kinds of obstacles in our journey towards heaven.

We carry mentally tomorrow's troubles as well as today's. And often, very often, we find at the end that our doubts and alarms were groundless and the thing that we dreaded most has never come to pass.

These women had come to what appear to them a real obstacle. they'd come to anoint a dead Jesus and they came and realised that, you know, they didn't have even that strength to move the stone away and they were wondering who's going to move that stone for them.

[ 17 : 41 ] To them, these women, things were just impossible to resolve. But remember, God is on the throne. God knows and God sees.

And for God, all things are possible. I mean, to ordinary human eyes, it's impossible that a dead person is raised to life.

But with God, all things are possible and the impossible is seen to be possible in the experience of these women when they do see that the stone is rolled away and that rolling away of the stone that reveals the empty tomb.

But let's read again the reaction of these women when they see the stones being rolled away. Verses 5 and 6, Mark 16. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen. He's not here. See the place where they laid him.

[ 18 : 55 ] It's back to this sense of seeing. I mean, they looked up and they saw with their own eyes that they saw this angel, the angel in the form of a young man dressed in white.

And that much they did see physically. But there was more seeing to be done as the angel tells them. Tells them to see with physical eyes, yes, but above all to see with eyes of faith that Jesus wasn't there because Jesus had risen from the dead.

Their physical eyes could see the evidence, but their eyes of faith needed to see what before they hadn't seen. The Lord, Jesus, had promised that what was going to happen had happened.

Jesus, of course, on a number of occasions before his death had said that after three days he would rise from the dead. And undoubtedly these women had heard Jesus say these words.

These women would accompany the disciples on Jesus' mission. What Jesus had said, undoubtedly these women had heard.

[ 20 : 02 ] But they hadn't believed. Their eyes had been blinded to the truth of Jesus' word. But now that angel's telling these women, look, see, Jesus isn't in the tomb.

He's not there because he's risen. The angels, as if the angels sang to these women, you saw him die on the cross. You saw where he'd been laid in death.

But now see again, look again, he's risen. What to man is impossible is not impossible with God.

And at this time of year when the resurrection of Jesus is remembered and rejoiced over, there are still many who say impossible.

Still many who say no one once dead can be raised to life again. But these are words spoken through lack of faith, through all who don't see by faith, whose minds have been blinded by the God of the world.

Just as the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4.4 when he said these words, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the

glory of Christ, who's the image of God.

[ 21 : 21 ] But you whose minds, whose hearts aren't blinded, you who do see the Savior, you know and you have that privilege to know that he's yours, you're his and he is yours.

And you know that, not by your own seeing, but by the sight that God has given you to see, for at one time you didn't see. Because you can say, you who know Jesus as Savior, you can say that once I was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see, but now I see.

Oh, what, who do you see? You see much, you see the beauty, of the Lord Jesus, you see the beauty of the Savior who gave his life for you and who's risen for you.

You see the love, the love of Jesus, that love that will never let you go because Jesus gave his life for you. And you see the grace of the Lord Jesus, that grace that has given to you what you don't deserve, what I don't deserve.

And you see Jesus, Jesus, just as the women saw Jesus as they were called to do so by the angel, you read in verse seven, but go, tell his disciples and Peter that he's going before you to Galilee.

[ 22 : 42 ] Then these words, there you will see him just as he told you. the angel had spoken words that these women certainly hadn't expected to hear that morning.

They'd left their homes thinking that they were somehow going to anoint a dead Jesus. But these women are told that with them and the disciples, they're going to see Jesus in Galilee.

So from that tomb in Jerusalem, they were going to go northwards to Galilee, and they would see their risen Saviour. And of course, not just physically see, but to put their faith in him and believe.

And so I ask you at this Easter time, I ask you to turn your eyes upon Jesus. I've said it before fairly recently, but I'll say it again in this form of worship, to turn your eyes upon Jesus and to look full on his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace. And it's that joy that the believer has when he can, when she can even echo the words of the psalm that we were singing, Psalm 40, that psalm that tells of seeing God, God who's made you see, see him in all his glory.

[ 24 : 04 ] In Psalm 40, verse 3, he put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

Lord, I pray that, you know, as we're all gathered together in worship this morning, it's wonderful to be able to do this, wonderful to know that so many are in this worship format this morning.

God, I pray that you will and do see and continue to see and put your faith in the one who truly is to be honoured and glorified because seeing Jesus, seeing the one who was raised to life on that third day, you see him who's now seated in glory and you'll know that blessing that you have, that you truly can say that you see him, he who sees you and knows you.

And as you see Jesus, look upon him, see him as he's made himself known to you in his word and in your heart.

And as you see him, as you continue to look upon him, then truly lesser things will have no importance in your life. One of the great blessings at this time of year and certainly in this enforced lockdown is the opportunity to take a regular exercise once a day, just to get out of the house and to go on our walks.

[ 25 : 40 ] In my walks around Mid Calder, I'm seeing things that I actually never noticed before. Even the very branches of the trees around the house, even the wooded areas around, the scenery so resplendent at this time of year.

Of course, it was always there, but now I'm seeing things more intently. I'm seeing what has always been there. I'm seeing what always has, in a sense, been seen, but never truly perceived, never truly taken into my mind and my heart.

And I pray at this time of Easter, this strange time of lockdown, that God is saying to you and asking you to look to Jesus, see him and to see him more, to look in the Saviour, to see Jesus and to see him as you read of him in his word and to meditate upon Jesus as you read of him.

Take to mind, take to heart all that you're seeing of the Lord Jesus and his love for you and see him, truly see him with these eyes of faith and follow him.

And yes, give thanks that you have been given eyes to see. And know this, that when your life is ended and your soul enters the glory of heaven and you're promised that you will see him face to face.

[ 27 : 06 ] Well, may God bless to us his word and let's join together in prayer. Amen. Lord, we give you thanks for your word, your word of truth.

We give you thanks, Lord, that in your word we see Jesus. And we pray, Lord, that truly for all who have gathered together and worshipped this morning, whether in our own congregation or in many other congregations who are worshipping you in such a means as this, that you will give them the blessing of sight, that sight to see and to see and to glorify you.

So, Lord, we pray that truly you will bless and have blessed this time of worship. Bless us, Lord, and our continued fellowship one with another. And be with us, Lord, we pray, even through this day.

And so, Lord, go before us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, we're going to, I'm going to ask to toul■■■ if we have to