

Long live the King!

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you. Hello, everybody, again. It's my great privilege to tell you the greatest story ever told.

It has been told probably to billions of people on this earth, and today hundreds of millions will hear it again. It may be the first time you'll ever hear it, or you've heard it a lot before, but I do want to say to you, if you hear this story and believe it, it will change everything.

In fact, this story is the story. This story is the one thing that changes everything. I wonder if you remember 9-11.

Judy and I were on our wedding anniversary, and we thought we'd put the telly on. We'd gone away. I thought we'd put the telly on, and there it was, a plane going into a building. And I just remember we were consumed by the event.

We couldn't turn the telly off. We were transfixed in shock, and I could actually say we were bewildered. Bewildered is the idea, I don't know how to process this.

[1 : 20] Bewildered is, I am completely thrown. I've been hit for a six. This is, I just don't know what to make of it.

And I do remember saying something like, you know, the world will never be the same again. That was sort of like what I thought. As a person, you've certainly had your ups and downs, and either way, you can be bewildered.

Bewildered is when you're just taken aback by the enormity of what's happened. Yesterday, got a phone call. My brother-in-law, serious accident, smashed in by a car, thrown, neck injury.

So I go and visit him in the hospital, totally bruised, millimetres. They said millimetres, and he would have been a quadriplegic.

Can you imagine? So I'm sort of going, imagine if it had been a few more millimetres. Everything. Everything would have been changed.

[2 : 30] Whatever you may have faced, you can look back and say, with the big things, that you were changed in your life deeply.

And today is a story where I would say that when you do get it, I mean, everything. We say, oh, now that I get this, everything has changed. Like, there is nothing without exception that is not changed by what's happened.

Now, we're looking at a passage, and it's quite intriguing. This Bible passage is from the Bible, and it's from a part of the Bible called Mark, and what was just read to you was from part of that Bible story.

And I want to talk about three people. First of all, Mark, who is he? Secondly, about a man called Peter, who is sort of what the story is about, though it's Jesus, and then actually some women.

The women get a Guernsey, they run, and they win the race, which is very appropriate. So the story I have to tell, remember I said I have a story to tell you, the biggest story I've ever heard.

[3 : 43] You won't get all of it necessarily, but if I was to tell you the story in less than a minute, the God of all the universe, there's only one who is the creator of all things, loved his world so much that he sent his son, and Jesus became a man.

He lived on this earth the perfect life that we could never possibly live, but the reason he came was not to show off, but to having lived the perfect life, he chose to die the death we deserve, because we've not lived the perfect life so we could be forgiven.

That's the cross. Then he's risen from the dead, saying to anyone that puts their faith in him, I now can forgive you, and having conquered death, I can give you life forever in heaven.

It's amazing. Changes people's lives. Well, let me start talking to you about the three people, because we'll get to that story as it unfolds. Mark.

Who's Mark? Now, I know you've done a series on Mark, but please forgive me if everything I say, oh, yeah, yeah, we've heard this, but just be patient. Mark lived in the first century.

[4 : 57] When Jesus was crucified in the 30s AD, he was still a boy. In fact, he'd most likely met Jesus, heard Jesus, seen him do miracles, even followed him, and when he grew up, he wrote Mark.

Mark was a scribe. A scribe was a professional writer. People would pay them to write. In Jesus' day, virtually not a single person could write.

Do you remember what it was like in school? First class, second class, third class, and I have all these couples filling out their notice of intended forms. They still can't write.

Writing is hard. It takes a long time, and back in those days, you needed to be a professional scribe who'd spent many, many years learning how to write.

So Mark ended up being a scribe for a number of people, including the Apostle Paul, writing a lot of letters, and sometime in about 60s AD, he helped Peter write his gospel.

[6 : 06] Now, this is most likely how it worked out. Peter was the boss of Jesus' disciples. He was the leader. He had spent the last 30 years since Jesus had died.

Jesus died at the age of 33, another 30 years, telling the story of his eyewitness account of being with Jesus and seeing him do all the miracles.

And at some point, he decided, I'm going to have to have this written down. I can't write. So I'm going to get Mark to be my scribe.

And what would have happened? Mark wouldn't have just said, you know, tell me a story and I'll write it down. Now, they would have done it together. And Peter and Mark together would have, well, Peter would have told him and they wrote it down.

And, but it's really unusual. How do you tell the story of Jesus over three years when writing took forever?

[7 : 06] So even Mark's gospel, which is only a few pages, was extremely expensive to do and to copy. So how do you do it? Well, Peter decided, let's ignore the first 30 years of Jesus' life.

We'll start at age 30. And then he said, also Jesus dying is really important. So halfway through this book, why don't we just talk about the last few weeks of his life and when he dies?

So that's an interesting way of writing a book. And I'm particularly interested, you may not have noticed, but Mark finished with the angel appearing to the ladies.

And then we're told the ladies are so frightened, they run away and they're bewildered and they don't tell anyone. Now you think, why did he finish there? By the way, obviously some people didn't think that was good enough.

So later on, some people added stuff at the end of Mark. But we know that, and if you look at your Bibles, it says someone added this later. This is not what Peter wrote. So I'm just interested, why did Peter finish like that?

[8 : 07] Well, let's talk about Peter. You've heard about Peter? Be patient. Peter was the leader of the disciples, but as I put in the outline, he was a tragic failure.

In fact, Mark 14 just describes how terribly hopeless and despairingly, betrayingly, gutlessly, he reacted to Jesus' hardship.

In fact, I'm very impressed. Peter was very honest. He did not let Mark write his story so that Peter was the hero. Peter made sure that Mark wrote down all the times he got it wrong, so no one thought, oh, isn't Peter amazing?

I'm sure if you had a chance to have your biography written, you would sort of come out pretty good, but not Peter. So a number of things happened. Let me just, I'm sorry I know you've heard this, but let me just go back, because apparently I only got up to Mark 8 recently.

It's Thursday night. Jesus gets crucified the next morning. And what happens is Jesus is walking to the Garden of Gethsemane where he's going to pray and be arrested.

[9 : 21] And as he's walking along, he says to his disciples, actually, you're all going to deny me and run away. Peter says, well, they might, but not me. Jesus says, oh, Peter, I'm telling you, tonight, you're going to actually deny me three times before the cock crows twice.

And then Peter said to Mark, write down what I said. I said, I, Peter, insisted emphatically, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

Peter says, write that down. And that's what Mark writes down. When they get to the Garden, Jesus actually tells just Peter, James and John, I am absolutely devastated.

This is what Peter told Mark to write down. Peter says, Jesus began to be deeply distressed and troubled, saying, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

He said to them, stay here and keep watch. Now, never really before had Jesus ever spoken like that to his disciples. And it's just to Peter, James and John, he's saying, guys, I am overwhelmed.

[10 : 41] I am frightened. I am fearful. Would you watch for me? Peter goes and prays. Sorry, then Jesus goes and prays.

But what happens is Jesus comes back and he finds them asleep. So Peter said to Mark, write this down. He came up and he said, Peter, are you asleep?

could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. I mean, how did Peter feel?

How often did Jesus reach out and say, look, I've always been there for you, but right now, could you be there for me? I really need your help. I'm really frightened and scared. Would you be there for me?

And Peter falls asleep with James and John. Well, he must have felt dreadful. Jesus went away and to make things work, Jesus comes back the second time and they're asleep again.

[11 : 41] And so we read in Mark 14, 40, when Jesus came back, he found them sleeping again because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

Peter was bewildered. He was lost for words. He could not believe he'd fallen asleep. And when Jesus woke him up again, he's sort of going, I'm so sorry.

I don't know how this happened. Jesus went away and comes back again and again. Peter's bewildered. He's lost for words. He's flummoxed. But when the time comes for Jesus to be arrested, Peter is all brave.

He actually has a sword and I suspect he'd never used it before. And so when the baddies come, he sort of goes like that and cuts off an ear, which doesn't sound very fatal to me.

Jesus basically says, stop it. Don't do that anymore. And he lets them arrest him. And we're told, Peter says, write this down, verse 50 of 14, everyone, everyone deserted him and fled, including Peter.

[12 : 52] They all ran into the darkness, including Peter. But then comes one of the really saddest points for Peter, the failure.

Jesus is taken to the religious leaders and because it's pitch dark, I mean, Peter could have done this. He just would have followed in the darkness, the torches, and eventually they get to the high priest's place and Jesus gets taken in.

But there's a courtyard and it's all dark and there's some fires burning. So Peter sort of sneaks in and warms his hand and you probably know the story. You know, weren't you with Jesus? No, no, of course not.

Then someone else, weren't you with Jesus? No, I don't even know the guy. Then the third time, I'm sure you were with Jesus. You are Galilean like him. And Peter says to Mark, write down what I said.

I began to call down curses on myself. I swore to them, I don't know this man you're talking about.

[13 : 53] He called down curses on himself. May God himself strike me dead. I don't know this man. Immediately the cock crowed the second time.

Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him before the cock crows twice. You will disown me three times and he broke down and he wept and he must have run out and again, the idea of being bewildered is I am so overwhelmed by what has just happened.

I cannot think straight. I am weeping. I am devastated. All that I live for has been lost. Peter was an abject total failure and he says, make sure that's down there.

Don't write me as some kind of super guy. But then we come to the women and I like this. I didn't even occur to me. I had to read the Bible. Oh, the women are the heroes.

Go ahead, ladies. That running thing was very clever. Not sure how accurate it was. If Peter's a total failure, it turns out the women are the heroes.

[15 : 04] In fact, from this point, Peter is not even mentioned again. We don't know whether he was at the crucifixion or not. He's not mentioned. I think he may have. He's just not mentioned anymore.

He's probably away licking his wounds and feeling sorry for himself. Well, the passage that was printed, sorry, the reason I did it a bit longer, it starts with, then Jesus, with a loud cry, breathed his last and died.

And we're told in verse 40, which is there, the women were there. So let me read to you from verse 40. We now learn, even though Mark has sort of recorded the disciples and all the other guys, we only now learn that Jesus had been accompanied by a number of women the whole time as well.

And basically their job, if you like, was to meet the needs of Jesus and the disciples. And just so you know, the two that are mentioned, there's four times the women are mentioned and there's two that are in every time.

One is Mary the Magdalene and the other one is Mary, mother of James the Younger and Joseph, which is actually Jesus' mum. And then later on, she's called Mary the mother of Joseph and then again, Mary the mother of James the Younger.

[16 : 47] They're his brothers. Very interesting. Mary's never, not really referred to as the mother of Jesus anymore. She's the mother of his brothers.

Anyhow. So the women are there. All the disciples have run away and we're told they're there watching the crucifixion. Now we heard about it on Good Friday.

May I briefly tell you what they saw. Because remember we hear them running away, bewildered after they find the tomb empty. What did they see?

I suspect the first time the women saw him, they noticed that Jesus and the disciples didn't come home Thursday night or just the disciples. And the first time they see Jesus was when he was leaving Pilate's palace.

He was unrecognisable. Spikes beaten into his head, face swollen, eyes and lips from being punched. His whole body was covered in blood because he'd been flogged.

[17 : 52] It was horrific. No doubt they were absolutely gutted when they saw him. Horrified, screaming, weeping, sobbing.

Then they're there and they see him crucified. I won't go into great lengths, but the way a person was crucified, which is what they saw, a major beam's there. They would carry the cross beam, they'd put it down and then they'd lie the person down, tie their arms on, put spikes through their wrists, put their ankles together, spike through the ankles, then lift them up and drop the cross in about a half a metre hole, clunk, hit a wedge so it would stay there.

They saw it happen. They saw the next six hours people screaming and yelling and jeering. It's a little bit hard to imagine, but in some respects perhaps not.

People go and watch stonings today. People would go and watch crucifixions. Not quite the same, but like going to a footy match. They'd all yell and jeer.

They'd probably take wages. Who's going to cry for mummy first? It was a terrible, voyeuristic, gut-wrenching, bloodthirsty sport that people like to watch.

[19 : 07] And so the women saw them yelling, ridiculing, mocking. And then we hear Jesus at the top of that reading, verse 37, he cries out with a loud cry.

He actually says just before it, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And he dies. Then we read at the end, verse 47, that what happens was not only did Jesus die, but eventually the others were killed and all taken off the cross.

And what happens when everyone would go home? So everyone went home, the bodies are still on the crosses and Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Jesus, are just there.

And while they're there, we're told a man, stranger to them, but obviously an important man who's dressed up in his religious regalia, came to take the body of Jesus down.

Now, I've noticed paintings have people lovingly trying to get Jesus from the cross. There's only one way they'd get him down. They'd lift it out of the thing and it'd slam on the ground. The only way to get the spikes out would be to hit them like this, which would totally destroy hands and feet.

[20 : 22] And then the corpse was thrown into a grave. Well, this man took his body, put some kind of shroud on it, probably on a donkey or something, and took it to a tomb.

And we're told the women followed them. They actually followed them and saw where Jesus was put. Then we're told, verse 1 of chapter 16, after all, so that was Friday night and when the sun goes down, the Sabbath began, which means they couldn't do anything except go to synagogue and be sort of, there's no markets.

So at the end of Saturday, could you imagine, just how devastated, gutted, grieving, overcome, bewildered you would be, the one you thought was the king of the world, now dead.

So we're told that night when the Sabbath was over, they could go and buy spices. Women were the ones that normally would embalm the dead and, I mean, they weren't necessarily thinking straight, but he wasn't prepared properly, so they were going to go and do it.

And now we come to Sunday morning and let me read to you, it's printed there for you, from verse 2. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, 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?

[21 : 52] See, they hadn't even thought about it. How are we going to get in there? We saw this massive stone put across. They weren't thinking straight, this is what you do when you're grieving. They just hadn't worked out what they were going to do.

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 a white robe sitting on the right side. They were alarmed.

The angel says, don't be alarmed, 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's going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.

Now, there is absolutely no way in the world these women expected this. They saw Jesus so brutally murdered, they knew he was dead and they had been grieving enormously.

[22 : 59] They were not thinking straight about embalming his body but that's what they'd come to do. The last thing, the last thing in a million years was that Jesus would come back from the dead.

The last thing. It was absolutely impossible for someone like that to come back. They just did not expect it. So when the angel said that, it's like, you know, slap it, I just cannot process what you have just said.

My world has gone from complete, total devastation to, is it possible? No, surely not. Is it, is it, I, can you understand what bewilderment means?

I just cannot take this in. And so we're told, verse 8, trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb.

They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid. And that's how it ends. That's how Peter and Mark decided to finish the story. Well, why did it end that way?

[24 : 09] I mean, we know this isn't the end of the story because they literally did when they came to their senses thinking hallelujah, went and told the disciples and off it went. We know Jesus then appears to them and to the other disciples.

In fact, that's how Christianity started. This is 30 years later. Peter had been telling his story for 30 years. Everyone who was a Christian or heard of Christianity knew Jesus had risen from the dead.

In fact, I think it would be impossible for someone in Mark's day to not know that Christians taught Jesus died and rose from the dead.

I mean, if they knew anything else, but they would have known that. That's what Christians were all about. He died and rose from the dead. So why did they write it like this? Well, who knows?

You realise it was extremely expensive, this gospel. It would have been endorsed by the apostle. It would have been started to be distributed at great cost, probably only to major church leaders or major churches.

[25 : 17] Copies were extensively done, but it took a long time. And the only way you would have heard it, you wouldn't go to the local library and get your own gospel. You would have to be in a group of Christians and it would be read to you.

Why did they finish like that? Well, it normally would have been read out loud and I guess when it finished, people would have responded and commented.

But I think more than anything, they could have related to the women's bewilderment, terror, fear, fleeing. Their lives have been turned upside down.

I mean, this is the most significant news of human history. If Jesus did actually rise from the dead, that changes everything.

In fact, I would argue there's nothing more important than Jesus rising from the dead. You obviously have things that you consider very important and the temptation that every single Christian, including people who are not Christians, sorry, wherever we are, we always have something that's more important than this.

[26 : 26] That's what sin is all about. And so, I don't know who you are, but there'll be some here that I'm shocked, I'm horrified, except I'm not surprised because I'm identical.

This massive truth is no longer the most important thing. My prayer for you would be that you are bewildered, that you are knocked off your perch, you are hit for a six, you are totally knocked to the ground by this truth, realising what I'm living for at the moment isn't worth living for.

My latest statement is if what you're living for isn't worth dying for, it's not worth living for. And there's a lot of people who think real estate, money, career, that's not what life's about because believe me, it's not worth dying for.

You never hear someone on their deathbed saying, if only I'd invested more in the share market. If only I had just nailed that deal with that new real estate.

It's not important and they know it. So my prayer is whatever it is for you and same for me, we will be totally bewildered when we realise this is worthless.

[27 : 37] Okay? And last thing, Peter does get a mention. Did you notice verse seven? Very wonderful. The angel told the women to tell the disciples and Peter.

See verse seven? Go tell his disciples and Peter. He's going ahead of you into Galilee. There is a very good chance that Peter had completely lost face.

Saw himself as having absolutely no authority, no credence. He was immoral, he was faithless and he could not lead and yet the angel says, tell Peter, tell Peter, Jesus has said he'll meet him in Galilee.

Can I just say the last thing I want to say? It does not matter what you have done. Peter could not have done much worse than what he did. But Jesus says, tell him, tell him, forgiveness and future, forgiveness and future.

I pray for any of you who do not yet serve and follow Jesus, I pray that you will be bewildered by the truth that sets people free.

[28 : 51] You will be so unsettled by the fact that what you live for is just not worth living for and you realise this is everything and it changes everything.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. We will take you