

Resurrection Sunday 17th April 22

Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Today is Easter Sunday or Resurrection Sunday which has a similar celebratory feel about it as Christmas Day does.



It's like we breathe a sigh of relief as the past week, the most important week in the Christian calendar, sparked many different emotions. Palm Sunday where Jesus rode in on a colt and everyone was excited and welcomed Him. But then, all the jubilation changed as the shadows gathered around Jesus. He met for His last Passover meal with His disciples, washed their feet as an example of how to serve and then they walked a short distance away to the garden where Jesus was overcome with fear and despair before the ugliness of betrayal, denial, and a mock trial occurred. He was whipped, a crown of thorns was placed on His head, He had to drag His cross along the street and then endured the sheer suffering and agony of crucifixion and finally death – surrendering His life into the hands of God. 'It is finished.' • His body placed in a tomb.

What occurred in the time between Jesus' death on the cross and the resurrection?

The time spent in the tomb. Darkness. Cut off from life. A time of silence, waiting, entombed. Jesus' body was lying on a stone ledge in the dark.

The empty tomb is only one part of the Easter story. Let's look at that first.

There is an 'in between time' which seems desolate. Nothing is happening. What was this time like for Jesus' disciples? Jesus had told them He would rise on the third day – what were they expecting?

For those first disciples, Friday was a black day of death and despair, and Saturday – the Sabbath - a day of emptiness and horror. For them, on that day, it was all over. All finished. What could life possibly mean now, where is hope?

As we read in Luke's Gospel, the women went to the tomb and found the stone at the entrance rolled away, and when they went in there was no body, except two men, in dazzling robes, who told them Jesus was not here – He had risen. The women rushed to tell the disciples, who thought their report was nonsense and didn't believe them. Peter ran to the tomb and when he looked in, he saw the empty linen wrappings that had been around Jesus' body.

This is the second part to the Easter story – the resurrection – a time of joy, laughter and new life.

Let's bring the tomb and resurrection experience into our context today.

What is your experience of Easter? A waiting time? An encounter with the risen Lord? One of the details in the Bible account of the resurrection refers to the 'empty linen wrappings' in the tomb.

This Easter time, are there grave clothes that we need to discard and leave in the tomb? What do the empty linen wrappings represent for us? We are invited out of darkness into the light of resurrection, out of death into new life, leaving behind the things that wrap us up in despair, loneliness and worry.

Resurrection means that failure will not have the last word. Resurrection means that wherever the Spirit of God comes to the hearts of people who are crushed by life, they begin to find hope, when they thought it was all gone. When we think - 'That's it. No more. I've had enough;' if we wait, on the third day (which is symbolic), there will be new life.

Are your circumstances making you feel like you are still in a dark place – like a tomb? Jesus knows your weakness, your need, and from His unlimited resources He will pour into your broken and thirsty life the comfort, healing and spiritual strength you need.

We all live with regret, the silent wound or ache we carry with us. Easter is an opportunity to deal with regret, to have our slate wiped clean, to get another chance through what Jesus accomplished on the Cross.

What if you believe there was no resurrection, that Jesus was crucified and that was that?

If there was no resurrection the sinless life, astonishing teaching, unbelievable miracles, gruesome death – none of it makes sense.

If there was no resurrection, we would do what the disciples initially did, go back to what you were doing – fishing as told in the Gospel of John. Why had the disciples gone fishing? Maybe to get on with life or to go back to what they knew so well. It would have felt strange after what they had been through with Jesus, but they had families to still care for.

But although they were old hands at it, they caught nothing. All their hard work during the night reaped no reward. Life can be like that. It can be a lot of hard work, and then leave us empty-handed and tired.

If there was no resurrection, then all the laws were just some man-made device to be a method of preserving order.

If there was no resurrection, then we must be the most dim-witted people on the planet. Every person for themselves and whoever amasses the most possessions – wins.

What have you been labouring over, and still getting nowhere with; not knowing what to do or where to go? We are all searching for a life that brings goodness, fullness and joy.

Scripture tells us, there is hope in Jesus. Is this why you are here today, because you understand that it is only God who brings life?

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here.

How has life become new in the light of Jesus' resurrection?

The joy of Easter is that God has truly come to us in Jesus Christ. Death can't stop Him, nothing can separate us from Him and new life gushes out as Christ works in us.

The first thing about new life in Christ is that we are surprised by Jesus...this is how it all starts. And when Jesus ceases to surprise us, that may be the moment we have stopped listening to Him.

Like the disciples in their fishing boat, are you watching for the dawn, watching for the figure on the shore; ready to hear His voice and do whatever He tells you to do?

Jesus called out to the disciples, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?" "No," they replied. Then He said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it. There was enough fish for breakfast for the whole village!

We need to respond to Jesus' voice and do whatever He tells us to do, then we will experience **new life**.

New life is being surprised by Jesus and the abundance He brings.

Befriend Jesus - read the gospels, pray to Him, tell Him that you want to

know Him personally. Listen to what He says. New life is not all up to us - our hope is that a strength way bigger than us is at work. Don't be anxious. Trust in the renewing work of Christ.

New Life provides a fresh start with renewed purpose. In my experience as a minister, I have witnessed the healing of memories, the finding of forgiveness that go back to buried hurts, fears, failures and sins that had not been dealt with.

Jesus goes to where the pain is. But many resist His gentle advance, like putting off going to the dentist until we can't bear the toothache.

There was a resurrection – not a symbolic resurrection either.

No-one pretends to understand the Easter death and resurrection fully but certain things do stand out of supreme importance.

The first is the uniqueness of Jesus. He is not just another religious leader, equal to or even better than Muhammad, Buddha or Moses. He is in a class by Himself. He was described by the early believers as King of Kings, Lord of Lords and God Himself.

The story of Jesus is supernatural from beginning to end. Any attempt to remove this element from the accounts destroys them entirely. The story abounds with references to God, angels, demons, Satan, miraculous events, divine healing and the Holy Spirit.

There is a challenge to us to believe and the command of Jesus to follow Him.

If we step out in faith, we will become new people in the same way that those who knew Jesus on earth were transformed when they yielded their hearts to Him.

Without the resurrection the life of Jesus doesn't make any sense and neither do ours. We die – that's it. Nothing else. We will be forgotten, **unless there is a resurrection.**

But death is not the end – Jesus broke the power of the grave. In John's Gospel Jesus said – I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.