



Word – Easter Sunday (Year A)

The Readings

The related readings for this Sunday are:

Jeremiah 31:1-6

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

Matthew 28:1-10

We have chosen the theme: **He's Alive**

All the readings are available as PowerPoint versions of the text using the NIV. Jeremiah 31:1-6 is offered as a Lectionary Video and Matthew 28:1-10 is covered by The Visual Bible - Matthew and we also offer a video of Rob Lacey reading the Passion story from the Street Bible. Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 is available as a Liturgical PowerPoint: "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good"

A talk

There is a PowerPoint slide accompany this talk.

I want to explore why the resurrection is so important; not just by talking about a historical event that happened some 2000 years ago and arguing whether or how it happened. Too many words have been spilled about that. Rather, I'll be talking about how the resurrection is directly relevant to our lives and impacts on our thinking today.

A huge thumbs up for Jesus

Matthew's account is probably the least read of the accounts; we nearly always favour Luke or John. Matthew's is quite different because of the earthquakes and angels sitting on the tombstone.

However these things bring out something really important. Reading the other accounts would lead you to believe that the resurrection could have been a spontaneous event rather like leaving a bulb in a cupboard and then returning a few weeks later and seeing it come to life. Leave a dead Son of God in a tomb and he will come back to life.

Matthew makes it clear that this is not the case. Whatever you make of the earthquake, angel and guards, Matthew is saying that this is a deliberate intervention by God, acting in a one-off special way to give Jesus a new life.

This is a Godly thumbs up to Jesus' life and mission. All his words and actions have won God's approval, for if they didn't then quite frankly God would not have acted in this amazing way to give him new life.

This means that we have to re-examine the whole of Jesus' life in the light of his resurrection and God's approval. This includes the claims of divinity (in his words and actions) and the miracles which are all affirmed, all confirmed, all shown to be true by the resurrection itself. Matthew's telling of the resurrection says that here is an approved lifestyle to study and to emulate.

Possibility of a New Start

Of course, we are human, and we fail to emulate this perfect lifestyle of Jesus. For instance Paul talks all the time about human flesh, our human nature, dragging us down and we all recognise that in ourselves.

The resurrection says that we can leave all that, our past failures, weakness and hurts behind. Over the years theologians have come up with all sorts of theories of what might have been going on when Jesus died and was raised. These theories are called collectively the doctrines of atonement. Was Jesus being punished on our behalf to satisfy a God who demands justice? Did God trick the devil by allowing Jesus to be killed and then by raising him again? Or is Jesus' immense self sacrifice is a fine example for us?

The truth to grasp is that what happened is beyond our understanding and that none of these is 100% right and none is 100% wrong. They all seek to give us a picture of what happened. If one specifically is helpful to you, great, and if not, be gracious enough to recognise that it might be helpful to another person.

However, what cannot be denied is that not letting go of past wrongs, weaknesses and hurts is very damaging for individuals. The process of confessing, repenting and accepting forgiveness is a very healing process and is something that can change a life for ever. Many of us have seen this happen in people and it is something that should not be ignored

In some way the death and resurrection of Jesus makes all this possible.

A glimpse of the resurrection life

Paul is very clear that the resurrection of Jesus is the first fruit of a general resurrection. In other words what God did was to take a little bit of something that is on offer to us all and give it to Jesus at least 2 millennia early.

This means, taking the long viewpoint, the resurrection to new life isn't an unusual event but what is unusual is that it has been brought forward just for Jesus.

This does not affect the points above, but it does something more, making these resurrection appearances really important. For they give us a clue to what is in store for us in the future.

Paul tells us about a new body, and the resurrection appearances show that this new body can do more than the old physical body could do. I feel very encouraged by all of this.

These 3 things mean that far from being just an event that happened 2,000 years ago, the resurrection reminds us that we are a church with a mission to help and support men and women

- By pointing to the life of Jesus as the ideal model of how life should be lived.
- By encouraging men and women to leave their past behind, seek forgiveness and healing and move into the new life offered by Christ
- And holding before them the promise of the gift of resurrection life – which can take away the fear of death.

Suggested Music

Good Joseph had a garden, Alda Milner-Barry, HP 195, CP 146, Video
(Tunes: 7 6 7 6 *lambic*, *Cherry Tree Carol*, *Good Joseph had a garden* (Hitchcock), *Hambridge*, *Jerusalem* (Dykes))

See what a morning, Keith Getty, Stuart Townend, STF 309, SOF 2020, MP 1105, TS 1494, Video

When Easter to the dark world came, William H. Hamilton, HP 200, STF 316, RAS 251, Video
(Tunes: 8 8 8 9 *including refrain*, *At Eastertide*, *Hilariter*, *Montgomery* (Magdalen Hospital))

Walking in a garden at the close of day, Hilary Greenwood, RAS 334, Video
(Tunes: 6 5 6 5 6 5 7 5, *Au Clair de la Lune*, *Dun Aluinn*)

IDEAS is a resource for All-Age worship produced each week from the Lectionary by Mike and Ann Bossingham. You can see more about this from the IDEAS website, www.FFCTIDEAS.org.uk

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