

Luke 24:1-12 Easter Day 20th April 2025

He is not here! He has risen! Remember how he told you?

So said the Angels to the women when they went to the tomb and found it empty.

Do you ever forget the words and promises of Jesus?

It seems Jesus' followers did. The women who went to the tomb with spices temporarily forgot and the disciples waiting in a huddle in fear of the authorities, took a bit longer to remember!

Today let us ponder anew that glorious Easter morning. Let us remember his resurrection, let us remember his words...*That the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners be crucified and on the third day be raised again.*

Jesus had spoken of his death at least 3 times we read in the gospels. The women who went to the tomb that morning must have been journeying with Jesus as his disciples along with the men...for they *remembered Jesus' words*.

These women loved Jesus and were in utter grief as they headed to the tomb that Sunday morning to anoint Jesus with the spices they had prepared. They were expecting to find a dead body, but instead they found the heavy stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. They enter and they do not find what they were expecting. It was empty.

This left them wondering/ perplexed.

It seems they are not left wondering for long...The Father knows they have come to respect and honour his son Jesus, to weep and grieve. He doesn't leave them in their grief but sends two angels with a message.

The women are understandably frightened, it seems these two men appeared from nowhere. The women bow down and the men ask them a question which may sound like a gentle rebuke...

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee?

Then they remembered. Can you imagine their utter incredulous amazement when they realize that the words they heard Jesus say were actually true?!

I can almost see a light go on in their minds and hearts, where there had been darkness and despair, now there was light and hope.

Before they had not understood, but now in faith they do.

Jesus' disciples had not wanted to believe him when he said he was going to die. When Jesus first predicted his death, **Peter rebuked him**. He could not believe his Lord would be killed; Peter wasn't going to let that happen on his watch. Then the second time we read in Mark that *they did not understand what he meant and were **afraid** to ask him about it*. When Jesus' told them for the third time of his death and that he would rise again on the third day, they were on their way to Jerusalem and his followers were **astonished and afraid**. Perhaps at that point they began to consider that he may be handed over to the authorities and be killed. They had heard of the grumbles and plots.

They could perhaps begin to imagine the death part of his predictions but forgot and did not understand when he said he would rise again after 3 days.

I mean why would they? Death is death, final. People don't come back to life...except Jesus had miraculously made this happen! He had raised the widow's son and then raised his friend Lazarus to life after he had been in the tomb four days! But who would bring Jesus back to life? They seem to have forgotten who Jesus was, their minds unable to grasp anything beyond what made sense to them. Jesus was dead.

What about the women, do they believe the message?

Unlike John's account where Jesus appears to Mary in the flesh, Luke says they were given the message that Jesus had risen from two angels. They saw evidence that Jesus was not in the tomb, but they did not at that stage see the risen Lord themselves. And yet, it seems they believed the message.

What then do they do? They naturally go and share the good news with the disciples. They do this by their own volition. John, Matthew, and Mark's account tell us that the women are *told* to go and tell the others, not in Luke...they go because that is what you do with good news, you share it. And they knew that the disciples were grieving Jesus's death, just like they had been. They wanted them to feel the joy they were now experiencing.

They go and tell the men...but are they believed? It seems not! These men are thinking logically, the women's *words seemed to them like nonsense*!

And they were women. Women were not seen as credible witnesses in those days. It just shows how Jesus turned societies norms upside down by appearing to women as the first witnesses to his resurrection!

Having followed Jesus and witnessed his values of raising the lowly, one might think the disciples would have been a little more enlightened. But even if they respected these women, their logical brains could not entertain that their message could be true. At this stage they certainly didn't seem to remember Jesus' words even when reminded...

But for one of those men, there was something in the women's message that made him curious enough to at least go and explore the truth for himself. It was Peter, the one who had said he would die rather than Jesus, the one who had then denied Jesus... perhaps he begins to remember Jesus words and feel stirrings of hope?

He runs to the tomb, could it be true? He sees *the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.*

Did he believe the evidence of the empty tomb along with the message the women brought from the angels? Or was it not until Jesus appeared in the flesh to the disciples that he truly believed? Later in chapter 24 of Luke we read that the disciples were frightened when Jesus came and stood among them saying "*Peace be with you*". He says to them "*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?*"

What is your response to the message we have today that Jesus rose from the dead and he lives? Do you have doubts? No doubt we all do doubt from time to time. Like the women at the tomb, we haven't seen the risen Jesus in the flesh ourselves, but we do have the message handed down in the bible, God's own word. Do we *believe* the message? It is an outrageous nonsensical message for our logical minds. And yet, I know that my heart is stirred to believe the unbelievable. God's Holy Spirit testifies to my spirit. I feel joy in the resurrected Lord. My Christian faith, my hope is dependent on the truth of that message, and I believe it!

As the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, our preaching is in vain, and our faith is futile if Christ has not been raised! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the crux of our Christian faith. This truth changed people's lives 2000 years ago and it still changes people's lives today.

Our faith in the resurrection of the dead, of eternal life, of looking for the day when Christ will come again and put all things right, gives us hope.

In the midst of this uncertain world Christians find hope during times of darkness and despair. We see glimmers of hope in Christians holding on to their faith in the darkest of times, in the darkest of places. Jesus brings hope and strength and comfort and joy to those who believe.

There are so many in the world that need to hear the message of good news, people in our family, in our community, our workplace, our social groups.

Do we believe the message that we have heard and like the women naturally go to share the news to those who need to hear it or...

Or do we hold back for fear of people thinking we are sharing words of nonsense?

Yes, just like those apostles who didn't believe the women, there will be many who don't believe us.

But just maybe if we share with conviction, faith, joy, and the testimony of the hope we have in Jesus, just maybe it will lead to even one getting up and going to explore the truth for themselves, like Peter. If you have questions, I invite you to come along to Alpha starting on the 30th April. A safe space to explore life, faith and meaning over a meal, a video and table discussion. Or maybe you know someone who is questioning, then invite them to come along with you. (If you are visiting from further afield look up an Alpha course near you.)

This world is hurting and broken, there are so many bad news stories and experiences...but we have a God who brings life out death, reconciliation out of conflict. It's good news the world needs to hear. Will we do more than just remember the story today. It is a message of hope not just relevant 2000 years ago, for Jesus is alive and he offers us new life today and for eternity, he brings us hope, peace, joy, light in the darkness...Let's go tell the others!

Christ is risen: **He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**