

Sunday service for Resurrection Sunday 12th April 2020

Welcome (Steve McAlister)

Good morning everyone, and welcome to our service as we come together to celebrate this very joyous occasion – the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Easter this year, is certainly one that we will not forget in a long time. Unfortunately, there are no trips away or camping, no long lunches with family and friends, no going to the beach that one last time before the swim season ends, and nor can we even just get outside and enjoy a picnic and an Easter egg hunt in the park! No, it is certainly something that is entirely different for us this year.

And, as we look at the events that were unfolding just over 2,000 years ago for those closest to Jesus, it was certainly an entirely different Passover for them, one that they would never forget. For only a few days previously, after celebrating the Passover dinner, they witnessed Jesus being arrested, tried, and then crucified. And now in Mark Chapter 16, we will see that they are in for a bigger surprise, one which will have an enormous effect on their lives. So, join with us as we reflect on what his means for our lives, and worship Jesus, our Risen King.

Prayer (Steve McAlister)

Our Heavenly Father, as we come before you today, we know that this Easter is not like any other that we have experienced. Our lives have changed dramatically as to how we go about our work or study, how we can shop, or exercise, or socialise; and even how we can worship you. But Lord, you are our rock and fortress, and are unchanging. You are always there for us, dependable and true to your promises, for you provide us with all that we need.

And Lord, as we come together on this day, Resurrection Sunday, we are reminded of your greatest provision. That as you promised, you sent us your one and only son, to die for us and to pay the price for our sins. That Jesus, although he did not sin, and was without blemish, was punished and died a cruel death on a cross, so that we might be saved. And Lord, we thank you that through Jesus' death and resurrection, he demonstrated that death has been defeated, that he is our Saviour and the King of Kings, and that we have the hope of being with you for eternity.

Lord, help us not to lose sight of what you have done for us, even in these difficult times. Help us to be reminded of your great love and mercy. And we ask that you will help us to love one another, and to live our lives in a way that pleases you and brings you glory. And Lord, although at this time we face restrictions on our movements and being able to physically be with others, we pray that opportunities may present themselves to let others know about you. We pray that we may be able to tell others of the true meaning of Easter, and that we may be able to encourage and support our brothers and sisters throughout this time. And we ask all these things in your Son's glorious and powerful name. Amen

Song (modern) Come people of the risen king <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j07fbld3uY>

Song (traditional) Jesus Christ is risen today <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkZ2aes2WfE>

Bible Reading – Luke 24:1-12 (NIV)

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸ Then they remembered his words. ⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and

to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Announcements

- **Focus for April – Easter.** With many of being confined to our homes this Easter it gives us more chance to soak in the message of Easter for ourselves. So why not be involved in all the services, Easter Thursday, Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday? Why not read through the Easter account in one of the gospels? Why not spend extra time meditation, pondering, reflecting and applying the trust to our lives? Why not set up more time to pray? Why not post something about Jesus over social media? This could be the best Easter ever if we just put Jesus at the centre of all that we do this Easter. So why not? There are no excuses this year!
- **Our interactive services.** How are our services going? We want to improve them but that will be dependent upon your feedback, good and bad. So, if you have bouquets or brickbats please send them to Stephen, Jon or one of the elders
- **Prayer.** In the midst of a once in a century event please find extra time to pray. We have started a Church prayer times on ZOOM each weekday at 7pm. It is easy to join and you can even do it from your home phone. If you wish to know how, speak to Jon for more details.
- **School Holidays.** Our small groups and our youth groups and playgroups will not be meeting (virtually) for two weeks starting from Good Friday. Please pray for those who lead those groups as it has been a tremendous amount of work to keep them running during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Taylor's will be on leave for a week starting tomorrow.** If you need pastoral help please give Jon a call.
- **Collection – March results.**
 - Budget offerings for March \$27, 330
 - Actual Offerings for March \$24, 783
 - Deficit for March \$2, 547
 - Surplus for Jan-Mar \$5, 910

Many thanks to those who have given generously this month as well as to those who have organised direct debits. This enables our Church to continue to preach, encourage, inspire and care for each other in this difficult time for us all.

- **Pastoral Care.** For those who haven't as yet filled in our pastoral care questionnaire. If not, text Stephen your answers on 0426 82 90 80. And if that is not possible, please send them in the post to Stephen @ 19 Imperial Close, Floraville 2280.

Kids Video

<https://www.play.bible/watch/jesus-is-alive>

Kids Song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECYn7r-Zbbg&list=PLSkYeXnWwUAtB1mUIMvPsz8PQD4VNhSQT>
1,2,3,4,5 Jesus Christ is now alive

Prayer. (Steve Gillard)

Father in Heaven, at Easter time we pause and remember your great sacrifice for us all those years ago. On Easter Sunday, we focus on the *victory* you gained over sin and death when you rose again. We acknowledge we are sinful and fallen people who need rescuing. Thank you that you loved us enough to send Jesus to earth to live a perfect life, that he died on the cross in our place, but more importantly that he rose again! We pray that His sacrifice and victory will be real in our lives, and in the lives of our family and friends, and that we will turn and follow you.

For our congregation we pray for those who are suffering directly with the covid-19 pandemic. Pray for compassion and provision for those who have lost their jobs, or those who are unwell. Pray for those who

are feeling anxious, that they will be comforted. Pray for our healthcare workers who are busy at the frontline treating those with the virus. Pray for wisdom and skill for medical researchers who are seeking to develop a vaccine.

In our country we pray for wisdom for the leaders of our nation. In our church we pray for wisdom and diligence for our leaders as we seek to draw our community together, and to continue to point people to Jesus as the only real source of hope in their lives.

We commit to you all our missionary families who are away from home, their support networks and loved ones. This week we commit to you the Appleby's in Indochina who are in lockdown away from their 'home base'. We pray that even in these circumstances they will have the opportunities to love their neighbours and remain a witness for you.

We remember our school children and university students who have been disrupted in their studies. We pray they will be resilient and adaptable in these circumstances, and we thank you for some holiday time coming up where they can have a break from these routines.

Finally, we pray for a time when we can be together again, where we can encourage each other in our Christian walk, where we can sing your praises, and boldly live a life worthy of our calling. In Jesus name, Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 16:1-8

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” ⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶ “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”⁸ Trembling & bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid” .^[a] [The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.] (NIV)

Song. See what a morning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJrUEVKGXTQ>

Sermon.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdO_KsMneYA

Or <https://www.facebook.com/Charlestown-Presbyterian-Church-113127747005906>

We live in extraordinary times. No one would have predicted the rate of change that has hit our country in the past 3 weeks. Just 3 weeks ago life was normal. It was going on as it had gone on for generations. We were going to work, playing sport on the weekends, going to Church, having parties and weddings and meals at a restaurant. Yes, there was something called the coronavirus that was devastating China but that was in China. And China is a long way away from us here in Newcastle.

But in a day or two everything changed. Everything changed. The virus took hold of our country. The Stock market collapsed. Social distancing measures were brought in. Businesses were forced to close. Panic buying set in. Unemployment rose. Churches could no longer meet. Society was shut down. It's been incredible. And we wouldn't believe it if we hadn't lived through it. But we are living through it. And did it happen! Even though our grandkids are going to struggle to believe our stories in the years to come when we say “back in my day we had this virus called COVID – 19”.

And isn't the resurrection story something similar? It's impossible to believe isn't it? Someone rising from the dead. Someone crucified, died, buried and then on the third day rising again? It's so impossible that the women didn't really believe it and they were there! The disciples were perplexed, Thomas doubted. These things just don't happen. Or do they?

As we come to Mark's final chapter, we see that in a very measured way Mark tells us the story of what happened on the third day. It's not sensationalized. It's not wild & outlandish. It's short, sharp and to the point and it led initially not to faith but to confusion, not to rejoicing but to doubt & fear. Because this is big. Really big. This is not a once in a 100-year event not a once in a 2000-year event this is a once in the history of the world type event. Let's see what happened.

1. SunRISE (verses 1-3)

16 *"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body".* So, on the Saturday night at sunset, maybe 26-27 hours after Jesus had died, these women go to the markets and buy spices for Jesus body. But it is too dark to do anything straight away so they wait for **sunrise**.

But what they intend to do, when they possible can do it, is not to embalm the body, not to mummify it but to remove the stench of death. Jerusalem's hot climate leads to corpses decaying rapidly. And so these women in an act of love, with a full measure of devotion and respect are willing to do this most unpleasant task for their Lord and Saviour Jesus.

So, ²*"Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, (probably around 6:30 in the morning) they were on their way to the tomb ³ & they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"* So, they are not really organised, are they? We have got the spices, tick, we know which tomb we are going to, tick but as they are on their way, they remember the stone. The stone! A stone was placed at the entrance of a tomb to stop grave robbers. It was normally rolled down a narrow slot & locked into a groove which meant you would need maybe 10 people to dislodge it & roll it back up into the slot.

And there were no men to help. Now where are the disciples? Why, aren't they willing to show their face at Jesus tomb? Are they running scared? Are they too devastated? Or is this sort of work dealing with dead bodies, too beneath them? We know that the women would have been in contact with the disciples but it is only the women who are brave enough, courageous enough, servant like enough that they come to the grave on the third day.

The third day. In Jewish thought a part of a day was seen as **a day**. So, the first day, Friday, Jesus died and was buried. Even though there would have only been two hours or so of that day left after Jesus died that is still counted as a day. The Second day was the Sabbath/Saturday and the third day had begun at around 6ish on Saturday night and now we were 12 hours later on the Sunday morning. Yes, the time from death to resurrection was around 36 hours but it still was the third day when the women came to the grave.

And you have to say there is no expectation, no expectation at all in a resurrection. They come with spices. They were worried about the stone. They had not the slightest idea that Jesus wouldn't be there in the tomb. None whatsoever. Not a blue clue! Because resurrections don't happen. They just don't happen. Yes, Jews of that time believed that there would be a general resurrection on the last day but not here, not now, not today, not with Jesus.

This was despite the fact that three times in Mark's gospel Jesus predicted that he would die and then on the third day rise again. In Mark 8 we read that *"Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and teachers of the law and that he must*

be killed and after three days rise again.” And he says the same thing again in Mark 9 & again in Mark 10. But the women must be a bit like me with a selective memory. A resurrection is the furthest thing from their minds. Which is why they get such a

2. SurpRISE (verses 4-5)

⁴“But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were **alarmed**”. The women were **dumbfounded**. They were **surprised**. For the stone had been rolled away! Now they weren’t expecting that.

You see the women didn’t just arrive at the tomb and say to each other. “He’s resurrected! Of course. Now why didn’t we consider that”! Or “blow me down it was true after all”! No, it wasn’t on their radar when they see the stone rolled away or even a few moments later when they enter the tomb and they see a man dressed in white.

Once again notice how restrained Mark is. He doesn’t elaborate and say they saw a heavenly being or an angel, even though that is what he is in effect saying. It’s just a man dressed in white. Sitting at the right side of the tomb. With a message directly from God. A message about Jesus. No wonder they are afraid.

You see angels are not just women with wings who go around talking about soft Philly cheese. They are God’s holy messengers. God’s power brought down to earth. One angel, just one angel, slew 185,000 Assyrians in one blow in 2 Kings 19. Angels had guarded the Garden of Eden and helped bring down the law and had appeared to some special people on very few occasions throughout the OT. But now something supernatural was happening. Something out of the ordinary. The stone is rolled away and the angel appears to them.

No wonder they are **surprised**. Astonished. Dumbfounded. Alarmed. Mark is being refreshingly honest here. It reminds me a bit of when I first started looking into Christianity & I read about the resurrection and I have to admit I didn’t expect Jesus rising from the dead would be true either. So I looked carefully at all the gospel stories. I looked at the history behind them. At what others have said might have happened. I weighed the evidence before I put my faith in such a story. At sunrise there was a surprise because of

3. RISEn (verse 6-7)

For that’s what the angel goes on to say. ⁶“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has **risen**! He is not here”. The angel presents the women with the facts. Jesus the Nazarene, the one that you have following these past years was crucified. That’s a fact. They had seen it happen. They were there. Jesus had not swooned. Jesus had not found a body double. He was crucified.

Actually, the Greek is Jesus **the crucified one**. Jesus had not just been crucified; he was still crucified. That’s interesting isn’t it? He hadn’t left his crucifixion behind. For he had died and his death was still a ransom for man. He had and still was bringing in a new covenant. He has and still is the one who had been man’s representative, their scapegoat, the one who took their sins onto the cross.

But Jesus the crucified one had now risen. He has **risen**! Nor revived but risen. Not reincarnated but risen. And not in a spiritual form but in a physical form. For just as he had died physically, the angel is telling the women he had now risen physically. Because he will meet up with you in Galilee as he said he would. So, death could not hold him. Jesus has conquered the grave. All that he has said up until now must have been true. For Jesus has been vindicated. Jesus has been raised. Jesus must have power over death.

He's the crucified one. Who has risen, for he is not here. See the place where they laid him. There is no one there. The tomb is empty. The evidence before them is rock solid.

Well is it? Since that time some people have said that the women got the wrong tomb. Others believe that the disciples stole the body. That the Romans stole the body. That the Jews stole the body. That Jesus was revived in the cool of the tomb and Houdini like escaped the grave clothes, pushed back the stone and appeared to the disciple as the resurrected Lord. And all of those things possibly could have happened. So, the angel says to the women,

Look! "*See the place where they laid him*". The graveclothes where the body has passed right through them. The fact that the tomb is empty and an angel is standing before you. Look and Listen. I have a message to you direct from Jesus, direct from God Himself. "*He is risen. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*" The angel was an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus had risen. The angel had a revelation, a message from God Himself, he had raised his son from the dead. God is giving the women His word. Yes, they can look but they have to listen, listen to what God is saying. Listen to the eyewitness evidence.

Look, listen & learn. There are implications that flow from the fact that Jesus is risen. You need to go & see him. You need to follow in his footsteps to Galilee. You need to keep the mission of Jesus alive. For his plan is not dead & buried. His message is not dead & buried. His mission is not dead & buried. God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's will, God's gospel is still available but not just to the Jews but now to everyone!

And the disciples and especially Peter might have run away, they might have let him down, they might even right now be too scared to show their faces but Jesus says to the women tell them I am waiting for you. I want you to be with me. There will be forgiveness & there is reconciliation for all those who have let me down because God's gospel must now go out.

4. MesmeRISE (verse 8)

And that news stuns the disciples, they are mesmerised! ⁸ "*Trembling & bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*" Don't you think that again proves this story to be true? If they were inventing a story the angel wouldn't have spoken to women. Their evidence was permissible in a court of law at that time and you wouldn't include the details that they were afraid and did nothing. For the victory has now been won. Jesus has risen from the dead and the women, the best and bravest of the lot, falter at the very first hurdle!

But Mark says that they didn't say a thing. The first human response to the news of the resurrection is fear. Can you imagine the three women talking to each other saying "*If we go back and say that Jesus has risen from the dead, they are going to think we are crazy. Certifiably so. Nobody will believe us.*"

So, tell me what do you think of these women? With this great command to speak the good news of Jesus, they go silent. Well I for one can relate to that silence. I know the fear of rejection. I know that silence is wrong. I know that sometimes I see God at work in my life and I attribute it to other factors. I know I have been silent far too many times when I should have been a witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. I know that at times I have heard God's word speak to me and I have not obeyed it because of fear.

5. CirculaRISE (verse 9ff)

And that is where the gospel of Mark ends. Quite abruptly. With the last word not being faith but fear. It is such a sudden ending that when the early church received this gospel (and started to circularise it amongst the many house churches scattered throughout the nations) they decided that because it doesn't tie all the loose ends together, because it doesn't really have a happy ending, because there is no word on whether

the women did actually tell the disciples, or whether the disciples did meet the risen Jesus or whether they were faithful in their mission, they decide to add another ending to Mark's gospel.

Actually there are four possibilities. That Mark's real ending was lost, the last page of the book was torn out somehow and we will never find it. Or if you look in the footnote of some of your Bibles you will find there is a short alternative ending just one verse but the textual evidence for this shorter ending is very, very weak. There is stronger evidence for a longer ending that might appear in your Bibles as verses 9 to 20 but almost all scholars today think that this was a second century addition as the words used and the expressions found there are quite different from the rest of Mark's gospel.

Which leaves the last option and that is Mark did end his gospel at verse 8 because like one of Jesus parables, this last ending makes us think through the implications of the resurrection ourselves. It is abrupt so we are now drawn into the story. What would we have done if we were the women? Would we have overcome our fears? Would we eventually find the faith to obey? Would we want to join Jesus where he is and continue his mission that he has handed like a baton onto us?

Would we have faith when the only thing in front of us is the word of God? The testimony of God's chosen messenger. For we are like the women, we don't get to see the risen Jesus. We have no proof other than the fact that the tomb is empty. But like them we do have the word of God. We do have a message from heaven assuring us that Jesus is alive. And if we are going to believe, if we are going to have faith, we will need to trust that. We will need to fight our fears. We are going to need to follow what God is saying to us, even if it seems too incredible to believe. Even if others might laugh at us or call us crazy. This ending places us perfectly in the women's shoes.

6. EnterPRISE

And that is God's plan, this is his final enterprise. At the cross everyone left him and he still did the job. He secured our salvation. Three days later when everyone else felt that Jesus was dead and buried the Lord showed his mighty power and raised his son back to life without one ounce of help from Jesus human followers. And now God has mandated that the message of the good news of Jesus is to go to all the earth and all he has in an earthly sense is a few fearful women. Some failed disciples. And people like you & me.

And that is all God needs. Because the apostle Paul says that the same power that raise Jesus Christ from the dead, the power of God's Holy Spirit is available to you and me. This is how the Church began, out of nothing. A few scared women running away from the tomb fearful. And look at what has happened since. The gospel has gone to almost all the world. But not because of us but because of the power of God.

This is his enterprise. This is his will. This is his mission. And so from the time of the resurrection and until the time of the second coming the task that is at hand is to witness to the resurrection of Jesus. It is to share the good news. It is to believe in the word of God, despite our fears and obey the word of God no matter what the consequences are.

Mark's gospel seems unfinished because in a way it is. You and I are part of the story of the church which has been given the task of writing the final sentence. And the final word is this. Don't be afraid. Jesus has risen. Go and tell the good news to all the earth. Tell them about the gospel of the Jesus Christ the son of God. God is back and now we see that Jesus is back. Back from the dead.

So, friends are you ready to obey? And will you be found sharing that Good news on the last day when he comes back for one last time to judge the living and dead? Because that day could be today, it could be tomorrow, it could be really soon.

Closing Song

Modern **O what a day** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqTrirdmuio>
Traditional **Thine be the glory** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbBOOmKMLmI>

Benediction. As we end our time of worship, hear these words from Mark 16, *“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”* Will we be afraid, or will be filled with faith?

Virtual Morning Tea

Why not join us on ZOOM for a virtual morning tea. You can connect by

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/630573464>

Meeting ID: 630 573 464

Password: 949109

Or if you are not able to join us on ZOOM please make some phone calls

1. To someone in the Church you haven’t seen/spoken to for a while
2. To someone in the church you don’t know, just look up your Church phonebook & give them a call.
3. A non-Christian you know. Just to see how they are going & if there is anything you can do to help.