

## Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2022

### Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

#### Welcome

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance<sup>3</sup>: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> & that he appeared to Cephas,<sup>4b</sup> and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers & sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles <sup>8</sup> & last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born

**Prayer.** Our Heavenly Father, as we come before you today, knowing even if everything else is changing around us, you are still 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. 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, 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 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today [Jesus Christ Is Risen Today - YouTube](#)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!<br/>Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!<br/>Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!<br/>Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!</p>                  | <p>3. But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!<br/>Our salvation have procured; Alleluia!<br/>Now above the sky he's king, Alleluia!<br/>Where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!</p> |
| <p>2. Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!<br/>Unto Christ, our heavenly king, Alleluia!<br/>Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!<br/>Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!</p> | <p>4. Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!<br/>Praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!<br/>Praise him, all you heavenly host, Alleluia!<br/>Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!</p> |

#### Bible Reading – Mark 15:42-47 (NIV)

<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

## Announcements

**HOPE Explored.** We would like to personally invite all those who come to church this weekend to a three week presentation called HOPE Explored. HOPE Explored is a short presentation of what Christians believe around three topics that should interest all of us – Hope, Peace and Purpose. It will be held in weeks 1 to 3 of Term 2, starting Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April. There will be Sessions in the day and at night on Tuesdays, Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays, in women’s groups and men’s groups and mixed groups. So why not join us? To find out more details just ask the person who invited you to Church today or ring one of the Church workers on the front of this bulletin. It might be the best decision you make for years!

Why not look at this video introduction? [Hope Explored Trailer - YouTube](#)

**Kids cooking classes:** For Years 3-7. Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 10-12noon. Cooking pizzas. Cost \$5. RSVP to Suzie by Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April. A great event to invite others along to. But please note that an adult needs to participate to help the child. There will be child-minding for those under 8. Please let Suzie know if you can help with classes or child minding.

**School Holidays.** NSW School holidays will end after next weekend. This means the regular activities of the Church will be in recess for another week.

## Song – Amazing Grace (my chains) [Amazing Grace \(My Chains are Gone\) - YouTube](#)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Amazing grace how sweet the sound<br/>That saved a wretch like me<br/>I once was lost, but now I'm found<br/>Was blind, but now I see</p> <p>2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear<br/>And grace my fears relieved<br/>How precious did that grace appear<br/>The hour I first believed</p> | <p>3. The Lord has promised good to me<br/>His word my hope secures<br/>He will my shield and portion be<br/>As long as life endures<br/>Chorus</p> <p>4. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow<br/>The sun forbear to shine<br/>But God who called me here below<br/>Will be forever mine, will be forever mine<br/>You are forever mine</p> |
|---|---|

Chorus: My chains are gone, I've been set free  
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me  
And like a flood His mercy reigns  
Unending love  
Amazing grace

## Pastoral Prayer Points – 17<sup>th</sup> April

- **Pray for Poland.** Praise God for the stability, progress, and freedom that allows believers to preach the good news! Many Poles dreamed of new wealth after independence from Communist rule. Sadly, unemployment and poverty still affect many, especially in rural areas. Even those who found riches did not find true satisfaction. Pray the people might search first for God, above all other pursuits. Pray also for the Christian Church as they show hospitality and love to the refugees from Ukraine.
- **Pray for a restful Easter break.** Safety on the roads. A break from work. And that God would open their hearts to the real meaning of Easter so that many might find hope and peace in Jesus.
- **Pray for the Pacific Islands** as COVID breaks into previously closed down borders. Pray for health workers who are very vulnerable due to a lack of PPE. Pray for those businesses reliant on trade and tourism. Pray that the Christians leaders of these countries and communities can encourage their people to grow in their trust in Jesus in these difficult times.
- **Pray for our Prime Minister, Premier and Mayor** that they might lead for the good of all, not just with one eye of getting re-elected.
- **Pray for the Barnes family** as they navigated little Emily’s cancer.

## Bible Reading – Mark 16:1-8 (NIV)

*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. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> "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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'" <sup>8</sup> Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

## Sermon – The day that changes everything!

Some events change everything, absolutely everything. When planes flew into the twin towers of New York on September 11, 2001, everything changed. Terrorism was no longer something just in a far-flung country. So safety measures and home security laws needed to be put in place, to keep us safe from the threat of terrorism.

Slide 2

And then on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, the World Health Organisation was informed of cases of the flu caused by an unknown cause in Wuhan City, China. This was another event that changed everything. The first COVID case in Australia appeared in Melbourne on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and since then our lives have been greatly changed. To keep us safe from the threat of a deadly pandemic.

Slide 3

But if you were to pin yourself down to one event that changes everything, absolutely everything, I believe it would be centred on Easter 30 AD, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is a weekend that changed the world. This is an event that is still changing the lives of people all over the world some 2000 years later.

For it is the day that God sent his one and only son to die. To die in our place. Jesus dies to take away the sin that would have led to our death. And that death meant that Jesus dies physically and spiritually. He is then separated from God, that's what spiritual death is all about. He is placed in a grave, a body that has been full of life, is now lifeless. He goes to hell as a punishment for our sins. But on the third day he rises from the dead. He is resurrected.

Sin can be forgiven. Our relationship with God can be restored. Death is not the end. We too can be resurrected. You get it? Everything changes. Everything. Because of Jesus. Because of Easter. Because God has a plan for your life and mine and it all revolves around Jesus.

But what does that change look like? Well, this morning I am going to introduce you to three people who participated in this life-giving change. For Joseph, it gave him fortitude. For Mary, it gave her faith. And for Peter, it gave him forgiveness. So, if you want courage and faith and forgiveness, looking at Jesus today could change everything for you as well.

Slide 4

### 1. Fortitude. (15:42-47)

<sup>42</sup> "It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,

<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. Slide 5 <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down

*the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid."*

Slide 6

Our passage focusses firstly on Joseph of Arimathea, "a prominent member of the Council". Now did I hear that right? A member of the council who has just condemned Jesus to death now breaks ranks and that very day boldly goes into Pilate's presence and asks for Jesus body. Now something is fishy here? Why didn't we hear that Joseph defended Jesus in the trials recorded in Mark 14 and 15?

Well John's gospel gives us a clue. "Joseph was a disciple of Jesus **but secretly** because he feared the Jews." (John 19:38). Joseph was a secret believer. In the shadows so to speak. Someone whose faith is still full of fear. But something about the trial or the death of Jesus has caused him to come out of the closet so to speak and step out of the shadows.

You see Jesus was now dead and our passage confirms that the Roman soldiers were sure that he was dead. Pilate checks himself, there is no way he wants to hand over a criminal who is almost dead to his supporters. He wants this case closed and off his books ASAP.

Now normally the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to be picked apart by birds of prey or eaten by dogs. It was part of the punishment. These people are garbage, they have no rights whatsoever and no dignity is afforded them. And so, it would have taken great courage for Joseph to step up and ask Pilate for Jesus body. And when he got it, he placed it in a new tomb that either he had bought especially or was for his own family.

Slide 7

And he worked quickly because the Sabbath was just an hour or two away. He would have taken the body down from the cross, washed the body, wrapped it in a linen cloth, placed it in the tomb and rolled the stone across. By touching a dead body he is now defiled and can't join in the rest of the Passover celebrations. He is exposing himself to danger from the Sanhedrin and he is aligning himself with Jesus and his followers, where-ever they are.

Now did you notice who were the only ones who had the courage of their convictions to be there at the end after Jesus died? Two Pharisees, Joseph and John's gospel also mentions Nicodemus and two women Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph. All the others have fled. All the others are in hiding. All their others are so scared that they have locked themselves away. But this weekend everything has changed for Joseph of Arimathea, this weekend his fear has led to courage.

Slide 8

I don't know whether you have ever heard the story of what happened at Brezhnev's funeral. The former leader of the Soviet Union had died and in his funeral service his wife stood motionless by his coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: she reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest.

There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all was showing those who were there that the only hope of life after death was found in the cross. In Jesus. She like Joseph of Arimathea had probably been a secret believer, silent for years. But now courageously signals her trust in Jesus. A very dangerous move in that environment

Slide 9

And I am glad that the Bible includes stories like that of Joseph of Arimathea. That it acknowledges that out there are secret believers who one day will find the courage of their convictions. Who in the crisis will tell the world that they are now followers of Jesus.

So can I ask you are you a bit like Joseph of Arimathea, because I know at times I have been. I don't always want to go in the opposite direction of the crowd. I struggle in my birth families' conversations when everyone is so anti-Christian. In recent times I have gulped when in tricky situations people have raised the issue of euthanasia, when they have blamed Christians on all the major wars and conflicts of the past, when the comment that religion ruins everything is used as a blunt instrument to have a go at all people of faith. I at times would prefer to be a secret believer.

Slide 10

But Easter changes everything. This is my Saviour dying for me. He is there because of my sins. He has loved me with an everlasting love. And because of what He has done for me, I want to respond with fortitude, with courage, with boldness. What about you? Will this weekend make you bold? Will you stand up for him? Walk with him, no matter how difficult the track and how much opposition are on the side of that road? Will you see that in the Bible there are people like you that were changed by Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit and so took up their cross and followed him?

Easter can give you that spark of courage. Jesus' death and resurrection can change everything. If today you would look to Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Give your life to Jesus. You too can have that sort of fortitude. No matter what life throws at you. No matter what the future of COVID brings us. No matter what happens with your family or friends or work or leisure, your life can change, if today you really have grasped the Easter story. It happened to Joseph and to it happened also to ...

Slide 11

## 2. Mary & the Fear that gave her Faith. (16:1-8)

*"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James & Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> & they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" Slide 12 <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed."*

Joseph had done a good job, but he hadn't the time to do a thorough job. Now 36 hours later the body of Jesus would be starting to smell because of the heat. And so, to prepare his body properly the women now stepped in. They were there when Joseph & Nicodemus had placed Jesus' corpse in a tomb, so they knew the place to go to. They had purchased the spices they would need. But as they carried them, they realised that they had a problem.

Slide 13

The stone. The stone had been rolled over the entrance. The tomb had been sealed by the Romans to stop the grave robbers, so how on earth were they going to get into the tomb? They were already upset for they had seen how their friend Jesus had been treated by the Romans, the Jews and the crowds. They were grieving because he was no longer there. They were nervous because they could be the next on the Sanhedrin's hit list.

And then worst of all they find that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty and what was even worse still was there was a strange man inside the tomb. Oh dear, they say to themselves. It just gets worse and worse.

Slide 14

*<sup>6</sup> "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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'" <sup>8</sup> Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."*

Here are women of faith. Women who stood by their Lord through thick and thin. Even when the disciples ran away, they stayed. Even when others jumped ship, they remained on the good ship SS Jesus. But now their world has been turned upside down. And they are given a new assignment. Not to anoint a dead body but to proclaim a risen Saviour. Not to stay close to home but to go far and wide following Jesus. And they blinked.

Look at the words that Mark attributes to them – alarmed, trembling, bewildered, speechless, afraid. Here are women who have run the race of faith hard the whole way and seem to give up when the finish line is in sight. Because they are filled with fear.

Listen to the words of preacher Sinclair Ferguson. *“Should they not have returned home rejoicing in the news they had heard? Is there not something unexpected about this response? That in itself is a mark of its authenticity (if we were to invent the story, we would not end it in this way.) But it is more. In Mark’s gospel, this fear is always man’s response to the breaking in of the power of God. It is the fear the disciples experienced when Jesus stilled the storm; the fear of the Gerasenes when Jesus delivered Legion, the fear of the disciples as they saw Jesus setting his face to Jerusalem to die on the cross. This fear is the response of men and women to Jesus as he shows his power and majesty as the Son of God.”*

Do you get what Sinclair is saying? Fear is not a bad thing when you are in the presence of raw power. For fear can make us weak and run away. But it also can help us to know our place and run to God for help. The OT says *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* Psalm 34 *“I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.”* And didn’t the angel at Jesus birth say *“Fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*

It is not wrong to be fearful. In fact, it might be wrong if you are never fearful. For there are difficult things in this world. There are tough assignments out there. Following Jesus is far from easy. And so there will be times where you and I will feel fear.

Slide 16

I mentioned last week the human rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King and what he did after receiving a phone call threatening him with murder. Let me say it again. He wrote down in his journal, *“My strength was gone. I sat at the kitchen table searching for a way of how to disappear without being considered a coward. In this state of utmost exhaustion and complete discouragement I laid down my need before God. With my head in my hands I prayed aloud. “Lord, I believe that I am fighting for a righteous cause. But now I am afraid. I cannot go any further. I have come to a point where I cannot make it on my own.” And almost immediately all my fears were gone. My insecurity disappeared! I was ready to face everything. Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. Nobody entered.”*

Slide 17

And in a way that is what happened to Mary and the other woman. They fled and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid, but in the end, they did tell the disciples. They continued to be women of faith even when that faith was mixed at times with fear. Because this Easter event changes everything. Jesus is alive. They are no longer serving a dead Saviour but a living Lord. They are no longer alone, Jesus is with them. They are no longer on the losing side but they are on God’s winning side. And so their fear and weakness drives them to the strength and faith that is a gift to them from God Himself.

Slide 18

And friends Easter can help us with our fears and our faith. Faith is not just a step into the unknown it is a step into the unknown alongside a known Saviour. A known Redeemer. A known Friend. And the more we take our fears to him and the more we see the power of God in the resurrection and the more we experience of love of God in the cross of Jesus, the more everything changes. Everything. He is alive. He is in control. He is Lord of not just the world but my world.

### 3. Fortitude, Fear and Forgiveness (16:7)

"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.'" Our passage turns from Joseph of Arimathea to Mary to Peter.

Slide 20

The man who had abandoned Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The man who had denied Jesus three times on the last day of his life. The man who hadn't even had the courage to turn up and see Jesus being crucified. Who could have asked for the body of Jesus when he had died but didn't, who could have been there that Sunday morning to help the women with the spices but wasn't. What is going to happen to poor old Peter & his fellow disciples?

They are still to go to Galilee as Jesus had previously told them to go. They have still got a commission, a great commission in fact, to go into all the world and make disciples of Jesus. Their desertion and denial are not going to lead to dissolution. For they are still Jesus disciples. And Jesus himself will meet Peter there in Galilee and forgive him three times. And restore him three times. And charge him with looking after his sheep and lambs three times.

Slide 21

For Easter is all about forgiveness. All of us have failed. All of us have let Jesus down. All of us have allowed our fears to run rampant inside of us. But that is why Jesus died on the cross. To forgive us our sins. To restore us to himself. To remind us that he has a task for all of his imperfect followers. To preach the gospel. To make disciples. To go and be his representatives wherever he calls.

God's grace is so great that he himself finds a way to forgive us our sins. God's mercy is so rich that no matter how far we have fallen he can restore us to himself. God's love is so great that he loves us no matter how bad we are. And that forgiveness is not just available to Peter but it is available to all of us here today.

Deweese Eunick is the mother of a 6 year old girl, killed by a 12 year old boy who was playfully wrestling with her. The 12 year old boy, Lionel Tate was being sentenced for life in prison for this murder. But the mother said to reporters on the ABC, *"It's more that he's a human being, you know?" she said. "And in spite of him murdering my daughter and taking my daughter's life, the thing is back in the olden days, you did an eye for an eye, right? (But) Jesus came, Jesus died for all our sins. When we do things wrong, we can go to him, we can ask for forgiveness, right? So who am I not to forgive him for what he did to my daughter and did to my life?"*

Slide 22

That's how Easter changes everything. You see if we have been forgiven by God, we have been set free from our sins. We now have a fresh start, a new purpose in life. And part of that purpose is that we can now forgive others their sins against us. The power of forgiveness can travel from heaven to the cross. From the cross to our lives. And then from our lives to those around us.

Slide 23

For forgiveness brings freedom. We are no longer controlled by our own sense of justice, for revenge, to strike back. We are free to choose, love over hatred, thankfulness rather than bitterness. You see holding onto an offence against someone is like being a jailer, where the offending party is in the jail. You're keeping them in there for good. You alone have the key to let them out, but you just won't, because of what they did to you. The problem is, since you're the jailer, you're stuck there too. Oh, the person might be behind the bars, but you can't go anywhere either. The only way to set yourself free is by letting them go free too.

As Lewis Smedes once put it, "Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free and to discover that prisoner was you."

Friends, Easter changes everything. Forgiveness is offered to us like it was offered to Peter. Faith is given to us even in the midst of fear like it was given to Mary. Fortitude is available to us even when we have failed God in the past like it was available to Joseph of Arimathea. All because of Jesus.

He rose and it is the resurrection of Christ that makes the Gospel, the Gospel. It's what makes the Good News good. For the tomb is empty. The Lord has risen. His Word is true. His promises real. His death satisfactory. His atonement complete. His obedience perfect. His service acceptable. His victory total. Jesus lives, and because He lives, we who believe in Him will also live. And through our relationship with Jesus we are given the fortitude, faith and forgiveness we need to deal with whatever our world will throw at us.

Slide 25

In 1987, Pope John Paul II went in the bowels of Rome's Rebibbia prison to visit Mehmet Ali Agca, a hired assassin who had tried to kill him and nearly succeeded. "I forgive you," said the Pope. One Milan newspaper reporting on that event said *"there will be no escape from wars, from hunger, from misery, from racial discrimination, from denial of human rights and not even from missiles, if our hearts are not changed."*

Slide 26

And how are our hearts changed? By Jesus. His death on the cross & his resurrection from the grave. That what changes everything. And that is what will change you today. If you put your trust in Him. If you seek to follow him. If you repent & ask for forgiveness from Him. That my friend is the life changing step that we are all called to make today. So, make it!

### Song – Oh, What a day [Oh, What a Day - Vimeo](#)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Let the joy begin, let our songs ring out<br/>Let our hearts be glad—love has banished doubt<br/>See the empty cross—all our debts are gone<br/>Only grace remains, for the victory's won</p> | <p>2. See the empty tomb, see the grave clothes there<br/>He has left this place; you won't find Him here<br/>All our fears have fled, let our hopes arise<br/>Heaven waits for us—we will never die</p> |
|---|--|

Chorus: Oh what a day, what a glorious day  
Oh what a day, what a glorious day  
When You conquered death  
And rose up from the grave  
What a day What a day

Chorus  
Bridge: There is still a day that we're awaiting  
When the glorious One we love appears  
He will take us home with Him forever  
He will finally wipe away our tears

**Closing.** *"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. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter,*