**JESUS: THE RESURRECTED REDEEMER**

Today, we celebrate the greatest day in the history of the world. The fact that Jesus, our Saviour, our Messiah, who was crucified on a Roman cross and died, arose from the dead.

This separates Christianity apart from every other belief in the world – if the bodily resurrection of Jesus was removed from our faith, we would have no means to escape an eternal fate in hell that awaits every unrepentant human being.

John’s account of this first day of the week is clear, Jesus lives.

We can have an assurance that as we serve a resurrected Redeemer, we have hope in this life and for eternity.

**John 20:1-11**

Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb before daylight, but already the stone had been removed and the tomb was empty.

She didn’t stay – we are told she ran to find the disciples who then arrive.

Note that it is Peter and John who go to the tomb – they seem to have been together since everyone else ran away whilst in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John’s reaction is to believe – for him, the lack of Jesus’ body, along with the grave clothes being still in place was enough.

Our translations state the linen strips were lying there to be seen – a literal description of that phrase can be that they were ‘still in their folds’, meaning that the material looked exactly as if it were still around the body of Jesus.

The burial spices would have hardened the cloths around the body to form a cocoon, so maybe theses cloths still resembled the shape of the body of Jesus.

Along with the cloth that had been used to cover Jesus’ face, these pieces of material were in an orderly and undisturbed state – had Jesus body been taken by grave robbers or even the disciples (as alleged by the Jewish authorities), these pieces of linen would have been taken as well.

Peter and John had gone, leaving Mary behind – we are told she wept for the loss of her Saviour.

She stayed out of devotion and gratitude for Jesus. **Mark 16:9** tells us she had been delivered from a life of sin.

Mary’s actions are an example for all of us – she knew, even within this tragedy, that she had been redeemed and that had been done by Jesus. She had yet to come to an understanding, along with all of the disciples that this redemption involved Jesus death and resurrection.

Her example is one of gratitude – her tears are brought on by the pain of losing someone that she loved.

We may not reach a point of crying, but our redeemed souls should continually acknowledge the love that Jesus had and has for you. Mary continues to put Jesus at the centre – do you?

But for a short time Mary does miss something – the possibility that Jesus was actually alive. In concentrating purely on a tomb that was inexplicably empty, she missed the greater truth that was awaiting her.

If she had not progressed beyond the point that Jesus was dead, she would have returned to her pitiful sinless life described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:19.

In a few moments, Mary would be changed.

We are beyond the resurrection – the tomb remains empty and we have numerous eye-witnesses to that fact in the Bible Scriptures.

How does that fact alter your relationship with the Lord?

If He is genuinely alive and is living in your heart, whatever your earthly circumstances, there should be an outpouring of His presence and of His joy in your life.

There were two other witnesses to the events at the tomb – two angels.

Scripture requires at least two witnesses to be in agreement and here we have God’s messengers bearing witness that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Jesus’ birth was announced by and angels and this occasion is no different. God wants there to be no doubt – it is His messengers in attendance.

Those angels were at rest – sitting. Their body language reinforced the fact that Jesus was alive and His work on earth had been finished.

On every other occasion that angels are pictured in the Bible, they are at work - carrying messages, fighting the enemy, doing other work for God. Here they rest.

Because Jesus is alive, we need no longer try to work to earn our salvation – you never could before, despite many people trying.

God doesn't want you to try and please Him for salvation. He doesn't want you being good to get into Heaven. He wants you to trust the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus and nothing more.

God wants you to come to Him simply by faith – He will do the rest.

He will save your soul and let you rest from your self-righteousness, your religious works and all your futile efforts to please Him. All He wants is your faith.

The thing that the angels did with Mary was to point out the empty tomb actually requires rejoicing rather than mourning. In spiritual language we are told to walk by faith rather than sight.

Without any criticism of Mary, she failed to discover God’s real spiritual blessing because she didn’t look to see what the Lord was trying to reveal to her.

That is for use too – God is often desperately trying to reveal a great truth or blessing to us – we just need to stop and ask Him to give us a clear insight int the unfolding events.

In Mary’s case, despite knowing that Jesus had said He would be raised to life again, her immediate circumstances - weeping and mourning - delayed the realisation that she was not the only person at the tomb.

She sees a man standing near her and in failing to recognise that it is Jesus, she continues weeping.

Today we have Jesus’ promise made in **Hebrews 13:5 I will never leave nor forsake you.**

But the events and the complexities that we bring to our individual lives often crowd out Jesus.

He will never leave you, but He does need you to invite Him to join you. He is gracious enough to be found in your time of need if you call on Him with all your heart.

**v15** - Mary is asked two questions – designed to bring her to the truth.

First – **why are you crying?** Why are you crying when you could be rejoicing?

Secondly - **Who is it you are looking for?** If she had understood the first question, she would have seen the second was really saying, ‘why do you look for the living amongst the dead?

On Easter Day, Jesus’ questions should remind us that Jesus is:

* **The Resurrection and the Life - John 11:25**
* **The Author / Prince of Life - Acts 3:15**
* **The One who would lay down His life and take it again- John 10:17**
* **The Way, the Truth and the Life - John 14:6**

**v16** – When Jesus doesn’t get a response to His questions, He simply calls Mary by name.

* As God, Jesus’ voice could have been the Creator calling the creature.
* As our Master, Jesus’ voice could have been calling to His servant.
* But here, Jesus’ voice is that of the Shepherd calling out to a lost and struggling sheep.

As Jesus called Mary, she:

* was redeemed
* was transformed from a mourner to worshipper
* responded with love and devotion for her Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus.

v17 – By implication Mary must have flung her arms around Jesus, as He tells her to stop it. That may seem strange, but consider:

* There was no need to hold onto Him for He was alive forever!
* He was about to step into the presence of His Father, to offer His blood as the perfect and final atonement for the sins of mankind – **Hebrew 9:6-13**.
* Jesus was about the become the ultimate wave offering before the Heavenly Father.

Leviticus 23:10-11 tells us about the wave offering. On the first day of the week, immediately following the Passover, the priest would take some of the wheat that was growing in the field. He would wave this before the Lord to symbolise that this was the first fruits and that there would be more to follow.

When Jesus appeared in Heaven before the Father, He presented Himself as our wave offering. He stood there as the firstfruits declaring that there would be more to follow **1 Corinthians 15:23**.

Every one who believes in Jesus will live because He lives - **1 Corinthians 15:51-58**.)

**v17-18** – Mary is told to and tell the Disciples that Jesus was alive and that He was ascending back to the Father. This was a message full of hope and blessing to those who mourned His death.

Today, we can be assured that message has not changed.

**Revelation 1:18** assures us that Jesus is alive – Jesus tells us Himself.

We are still commanded to come and see, then go and tell. all those who see that empty tomb and who will place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from their sins and will be born again.

Sadly, for many of God's children, they live as if they believed Jesus was still dead. There is no joy and no excitement in their lives.

There is no deep burning desire to worship and serve the God who sought us and bought us by His love and death at the cross.

We are not part of a dead religion – we may be able to visit the place that is said to be Jesus’ tomb, but He is not there. He has risen.

We do not serve a Saviour who wants to kill our joy and to leave us miserable.

We serve a Saviour, the very One who went to Calvary, died for sin and three days later arose from the dead to live forevermore.

Let us give praise for that.

**PRAY**

**John 20:1-18**

**Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!’**

**3So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.**

**11Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’ ‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said, ‘and I don’t know where they have put him.’ 14At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.**

**15He asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’**

**Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.’ 16Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’**

**She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means ‘Teacher’). 17Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’ 18Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that he had said these things to her.**

**1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

**12But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

**20But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**