

Sunday 12th April 2020 (Easter Sunday)

Glynde Lutheran Church

Sermon on John 20:1-18

Theme: "Easter and the Eastered"

"The resurrection of Jesus has changed your life: it means that..."

Introduction:

"Easter and the Eastered". Sounds like "Easter and the Easter eggs", doesn't it!? It's not that!

I want to talk to you this morning on the theme:

"Easter and the Eastered" (ones). The Eastered ones are those who live their life in the light of Easter. That's the first followers of Jesus, who personally experienced the resurrection of Jesus.... And that's us, too.

We, also, live our life in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

How were the lives of the first followers of Jesus different after they realised that Jesus had been raised from the dead by God, *and how is our life different in the light of the empty tomb?* Well, their lives and our life are different in three main ways. In the light of the empty tomb, they and we know that:

1. Jesus is alive, *not dead!*
2. Jesus *is* who he said he is: namely, God's Son, the Messiah, and our Saviour!
3. Death isn't the end.

Let's explore, now for a while, these ways in which Jesus' first followers' lives were different, *and how our life is different*, in the light of God's raising of Jesus from the dead....

Part 1: Jesus is alive, not dead

Let's go back in our imagination to that first Good Friday when Jesus was executed like a common criminal on a cross. How do you think Mary Magdalene, and the other women, and John, and the others gathered at the foot of the cross felt as they watched Jesus suffer excruciating pain and die? They would have been in the dark depths of grief and despair. Their beloved friend and companion and teacher was dead!

John, in his Gospel, tells how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for Jesus' body, and after obtaining permission from him to have the body, they wrapped it in linen, covered it in spices, and took it to new tomb in a garden near where Jesus had been crucified (*John 19:38-42*).

Mary Magdalene and the other women followed, and made the decision, apparently, to go first thing on the Sunday morning, *after the Sabbath day rest*, to anoint the body of Jesus with special spices and ointments (*Luke 23:56; 24:1*).

John, *in our Bible reading for this morning*, takes up the story of what happened when Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb early on the Sunday morning:

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, namely John, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" (*John 20:1-2*).

John then tells us that he and Peter ran to the tomb and saw for themselves that the tomb was empty, *save for the linen wrappings that has been placed around Jesus' body, and the clothe that had been around Jesus' head*.

It seems that Mary followed behind Peter and John, and after John and Peter had left, she "stood crying outside the tomb". John tells us:

While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. "Woman, why are you crying?", they asked her. She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, & I do not know where they have put him!?"

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?", Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?" She thought that it was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him and I will go and get him".

Jesus said to her, "Mary!". She turned towards him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (*This means 'Teacher'*). "Do not hold on to me", Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father.

But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him is is my Father and their Father, my God and their God” (John 20:11-17).

Imagine how Mary felt! Her friend and teacher was alive again! God had raised Jesus to life again! Her joy would have been overwhelming.

And later that day, *virtually* all the disciples would have likewise had a great smile on their faces. That night, Jesus appeared to all the disciples, *except Thomas who was absent*, and showed them beyond doubt that he was alive again: that God had raised him to life again (John 20:19-23; Luke 24:36-43).

And a week later, he did the same again, and this time Thomas was present, and Thomas had all his doubts dispelled as he touched the scars in Jesus’ hands, and put his hand into Jesus’ side where the Roman spear had been shoved in (John 20:24-29).

Imagine, the joy of all the followers of Jesus then. Jesus, their friend and companion and leader was alive. They had Jesus with them once again. And even after he had ascended to heaven, they knew that Jesus was alive and “with” them, for hadn’t he promised them:

“I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

And it’s the same with us! We, too, know that Jesus isn’t dead, but alive! Sure, we haven’t personally seen him alive again after his death on the cross.... But we have the testimony of those who saw Jesus alive again. And this is a testimony that we can believe and trust with every fibre of our being.

For these were trustworthy people, and furthermore they were people who were willing to suffer and die for what they preached, and what they knew to be the truth. *And as I’ve pointed out before, a person may be willing to go through a few hardships for a lie, but he or she won’t suffer and die for what they know to be a lie....*

And not only do we have the testimony of those who saw Jesus alive again after he died on the cross, but we also have experienced the presence and the power of the risen Lord Jesus in our lives, *as we’ve cried out to him, “Lord Jesus, help me!”*, and we’ve been helped in all sorts of ways.

So for us “Eastered ones”, us who live in the light of the resurrection of

Jesus, life is different in that we know that we are not alone. *Jesus is not dead, but alive*, and we have him as our Friend and our Companion.

Part 2: Jesus is who he said he is!

When Jesus suffered and died like a criminal on the cross, Jesus' followers were devastated. Not only was Jesus dead, but worse than that even, all their hopes and beliefs were utterly destroyed. They had believed that Jesus was God's Messiah, and God's Son, but now it seemed God had rejected Jesus (*cf. Matt. 16:16*). Because if Jesus was who he said he was, surely God would have rescued him, and not allowed him to suffer and to die on cross like he did! And doesn't the Old Testament say that "anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse"!? (*Deut. 21:22-23; cf. Acts 10:39; Gal. 3:13*).

God's raising of Jesus from the dead changed all that way of thinking about Jesus. God's raising of Jesus from the dead was God's shout of "yes" to Jesus and to all that Jesus had said about himself: that he was God's Son, God's Messiah, and that he was our Saviour (*cf. Mark 8:31;10:45; Matt. 26:28*).

The risen Lord Jesus then taught his disciples on the basis of the Old Testament about who he is and the purpose of his suffering and death. Listen to what Luke tells us that Jesus did after he had shown himself to the disciples on that first Easter Sunday night. Luke tells us:

Then Jesus said to them, "These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later..." (Luke 24:44-46).

We're not certain what passages of Scripture from the Old Testament Jesus used to teach his disciples about himself, but surely one of them would have been Isaiah 53, which we read on Good Friday:

**He endured the suffering that should have been ours,
the pain that we should have borne....**

**Because of our sins he was wounded,
beaten because of the evil we did.**

We are healed by the punishment he suffered,

**made whole by the blows he received.
All of us were like sheep that were lost,
each of us going his own way.
But the Lord made the punishment fall on him,
the punishment all of us deserved....
His death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness
(Isa. 53:4f).**

Jesus would have explained to them that he was God's Suffering Servant, and that he gave himself on the cross to rescue us. Sure, he died "accursed by God", but as Paul *under the inspiration of Jesus' Spirit* later points out in one of his letters, he did this for us!! (cf. Gal. 3:10-13).

After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus' "fleshed out" for his disciples all that he had taught them before about himself, but which they had never really understood before: namely that he would rescue them by suffering and dying for them (Mark 10:45; Matt. 26:28).

So for us "Eastered ones", us who live in the light of the resurrection of Jesus, life is different because we know that we can trust to be true everything that Jesus says about himself (*hold up the Bible*). God's raising of Jesus from the dead is God's stamp of approval on Jesus, and all that Jesus said about himself. It was for the first disciples of Jesus, and it is for us, too, today.

Part 3: Death isn't the end

And for us "Eastered ones", us who live in the light of the resurrection of Jesus, life is different, thirdly, in that we know that death isn't the end. Just as God raised Jesus, His Son, from the dead, won't He surely also raise us from the dead, *us who are His sons and His daughters through our faith in Jesus as our Saviour!*

Listen to what Paul writes about this in his wonderful resurrection chapter in his first letter to the Corinthians:

Now, since our message is that Christ has been raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? If that is true, it means that Christ hasn't been raised; and if Christ hasn't been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe... If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost. If our hope

in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world. But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised....

This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised it will be a Spiritual body.... Just as we wear the likeness of the man made from earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven....

Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. So when this takes place, and the mortal has been changed into the immortal, then the scripture will come true: "Death is destroyed; victory is complete!" (1 Cor. 15:12-20, 42-44, 49, 51f).

Conclusion:

We are the "Eastered ones". We, like the first followers of Jesus, live our life in the light of Easter. And the Easter event, *the resurrection of Jesus from the dead*, totally and completely changes our life. God's raising of Jesus from the dead means that we have a Friend and Companion and Lord who isn't dead but alive; that we can trust with every fibre of our being what Jesus said about himself, *that he is God's Son, and our Saviour*; and that we can know for certain that death isn't the end, but simply the start of a new life....