



Should have gone to Specsavers? John 20:1-18

So here we have it – I'd rank it as the greatest event in not just the Bible, but the history of the world – the resurrection of Jesus. For Mary Magdalene, it was a traumatic day, and if you were to look at her reactions in a superficial sense, particularly to mistake a man she had got to know really well over the previous three years as the local gardener your initial reaction may be "should have gone to Specsavers".

Jesus had spelt out quite clearly on a number of occasions previously that He was going to be killed and three days later rise again – but we can see from this story, and actually from the other three resurrection accounts that the initial reaction from His closest followers wasn't that at all.

The initial reaction of Mary was the same as the others. She looked for a rational explanation – someone had nicked the body for whatever reason. Even after Mary sees a couple of angels the penny still doesn't drop!

But before we start thinking "well how dumb is that" remember that we as a race live live with the assumption that when you're dead, you're dead" - dead people don't come back to life. However much they may have read of stories in the Bible where people were raised from the dead; the situation's a whole lot different when they're faced with the reality of a miracle. It took a while for the penny to drop and the Bible is frank in recording the initial unbelief of Mary and others.

When I lived in Norfolk I had a friend who was dead. Some years ago he contracted a serious illness where no hope was given for his survival. He says that he can remember his family coming to visit him to say their goodbyes. He remembers the doctor saying to his family that he would not last the night which was one of his last recollections of the evening he was pronounced dead after he had slipped into unconsciousness. He was told afterwards that because the mortuary was closed for the night, that it was decided to put the body in a side ward for the night.

Early the next morning, he woke up and wondered why they had put a sheet over his head. He was feeling so much better. There were some squirrels running around on the lawn in front of the window and he sat a while and then wandered out of the ward in search of tea. Luckily one of the nurses was walking along the corridor with a tray of tea. She looked at him, screamed, dropped the tray and ran off. A few minutes later the hospital's crash team arrived, to find him alive and well and walking around still looking for a cup of tea. He was supposed to be dead.

Was he dead? Or was it a misdiagnosis? Everybody I tell the story too says "the doctors made a mistake." Why? Because dead men don't rise – do they? How come he was dying in the evening and well the next day? Either way, it was a miracle he was alive because if he had been pronounced dead whilst he was still alive any earlier, he would have been put in the mortuary and died of hypothermia.

That's the wonder of that first Easter morning. We have a God who is capable of bringing the dead back to life so it's not surprising that His Son rose again. The disciples recovered from their initial shock and denial and realised that Jesus was alive. In fact in the days following His resurrection, Jesus was seen by hundreds of people – over 500 in one instance.

Now that's something you don't see and hear every day. For a man to have been brutalised and wounded so heavily as Jesus had been just doesn't reappear three days later fit and well. The disciples understood that, which is why they looked at other explanations for the disappearance of His body before coming to their final conclusion.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes had this saying: "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth." For many who have studied the resurrection of Jesus down the years, they've come to the Sherlock Holmes conclusion – He is risen!

If the resurrection is true, what does that mean for us? I believe God has a message for us this morning – be prepared to be surprised by Jesus! The problem with Easter is that we do the same thing every year. It's predictable, it's familiar and it can become matter-of-fact. We can forget about the power and the wonder of God which was so evident in the resurrection.

So often we see the work of God and don't recognise it. We try to find rational explanations. They may be good explanations where there should be a God explanation. We have our problems and issues and look for Jesus in them. But so often we see the gardener and we don't see the risen Lord Jesus Christ in all His might and power.

Hey, what's the gardener doing out that this time of the morning!

As we go to our churches and worship this morning, let's look for Jesus. Let's recognise Him as He works in the lives of others. let's recognise Him as He moves in our lives. Let's no longer see the gardener, let's see Jesus and bow down before Him and say "Rabboni, Master",

Prayer.

*Preached by Mark Reid
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PS – this was not an advert for Specsavers!