

Wow!

John 20:1-18

WOW

The disciples had experienced an amazing few years with Jesus. They had seen astonishing miracles – Jesus calming the storm, walking on the water, people healed, the dead raised. And then there was all the amazing teaching. And what about the way in which He always confounded the Jewish leaders and teachers of the law. Amazing. And of course the last week of Jesus' life had all gone so well – with all the cheering and rejoicing as Jesus rode into Jerusalem riding a donkey.

But suddenly, everything changed. Everything seemed to be dashed.

BETRAYED

The religious leaders were dead against Jesus. He told the truth about them and revealed their hypocrisy. He claimed to be God's Son. They wanted Him dead but were too afraid of the crowds. They needed someone to betray Jesus so that they could catch him when no-one was around. It was one of Jesus' disciples – one of the 12 – that betrayed Him – the cost 30 pieces of silver. The whole thing was a shock to the disciples – they ran off in fear. Well, Peter did try to do something but his attempt to use a sword was a bit stupid and then he denied Jesus. What a disaster evening for the disciples.

ARRESTED

So Jesus was arrested. What was now going to happen? They believed Jesus was God's Saviour, yet it seemed that He was the one that needed rescuing – but there was no-one there brave enough to do it! For the disciples it was worrying. Would they be next to be arrested?

CRUCIFIED

Horrifying. It wasn't just that Jesus was being crucified, God did not send angels or anything to save Him. Pilate had found Him innocent but still crucified Jesus. Where was the justice, where was the rescue. There wasn't. Jesus died a horrible death.

BURIED

It was the end no-one amongst the disciples had thought of. Jesus was dead. There was nothing to do now but to accept the offer of Joseph of Arimathea to put Jesus in his tomb.

HOPELESS

It was all just hopeless, depressing, awful. The women who came to the tomb on that Sunday morning arrived to carry out a very sad task – to properly embalm the body of Jesus. It was the last act of devotion.

TOMB

But oh, when they arrived, they had hoped someone would help them open the tomb – perhaps the guards Pilate had put on the tomb. But there was no-one there and the tomb was open. What was going on. These tombs were usually like a FAMILY VAULT like the ones we find in cemeteries here. The idea was that you opened the tomb each time you wanted to bury another deceased member of the family. The tomb Jesus was in was a new one – He was the first burial. Let's hear the story from John's gospel.

READING

The it all happened very fast. There was the angel, there were disciples rushing to the tomb – then there was Jesus. Then they realised what Jesus had said all along, but

they hadn't taken any notice of. He would die but He would rise again!

HE IS RISEN

Jesus had risen from the dead. Now if He is powerful enough to defeat death – then He's mighty to change things. And He's in the job of changing lives. He is one who brings forgiveness, hope, life, meaning. If you don't know Jesus, then He wants to know you today. Are you ready to trust and follow Him.

Maybe you have been a Christian for ages. If that's the case, then the risen Jesus challenges us to live His risen life.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

It's our passage for tonight. Resurrection is all about new beginnings. It's about bringing hope out of hopelessness. We live in a world that is hopeless right now. People are in situations they can't get out of: unemployment, debt, sickness, disappointment, depression. Is that you. If you don't know Jesus then He wants to change your life today. Will you follow Him.

If you are a Christian, Jesus want you to live His risen life. Your life should be hidden with Christ in God. Is it? Or have you slipped into the world's attitude to life and you are just as depressed and despondent as those disciples who had forgotten that Jesus had said time and again that He would be executed and rise again. How many times did He have to say it. Obviously more times than they heard it!

We have heard the message of the resurrection many times. It is a message of power. A message of how God intervenes in lives even in dramatic ways, as He did in the lives of the disciples of Jesus that day. He is risen, he can change. If you need Jesus, He offers you an new beginning. If you know Jesus and have allowed the world to sit on top of you – the today is a time for new beginnings.

You see you have a pebble. That represents whatever is holding you back from living the risen life of Jesus to the full this morning. In a few moments we are going to put flowers on the cross outside. Spring flowers speak so much of new life, new beginnings. To benefit from new beginnings, we have to get rid of that which burdens us. In a moment I'm going to pray to ask Jesus to release us from those things that stop us living His risen life. If you want to respond to that, take the pebble out to the cross and before you put flowers on, drop the pebble in the basket at the foot of the cross – then put up your symbol of new life!

Prayer

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MRBC Felixstowe 31/3/13
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