

# ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN

*(Mark 16.1-8)*

It is a privilege to share a few thoughts with you on this wonderful Easter Sunday morning. I always find that nature screams out "new life" at this time of the year. From our caravan window at Eagle House, I can see in the distance a group of tall trees and in one of the trees perched on a very high branch there is a large black bird's nest.

Strong and gusting winds have shaken the branch, bending it one way and then the other, but the nest has held in place, the parents making regular visits in a shift pattern. I'm anticipating the emergence of new life very soon. The grass is starting to grow, leaves are appearing on the trees and daffodils are out in abundance.

There is something just marvellous about all that God has made. It seems to be in His nature to make all things new! There is such joy as we celebrate an event which is central to our faith, the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Over the past month, we have heard or read sermons that transport us on a journey to the tomb. Brian Wake led us through the events at the last supper. Paul Arnold helped us to look at the agony that Jesus, in His humanity, experienced in the garden of Gethsemane. John Lambert considered Jesus on trial, and Paul Clayton assisted us to consider the cross-examination of Jesus before his accusers. Last Sunday, Mark Nile expanded on the crucifixion of Jesus, with all of its horrors and humiliation.

Now on Easter Sunday we acknowledge that this journey did not end in a stone tomb in Palestine over 2,000 years ago, but rather the journey continued with the resurrection of our saviour Jesus Christ. He Is Risen! In Mark's Gospel we have read the words of the angel "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here."

These three little words “He is risen” are probably some of the most important words recorded in the Gospels, if not the whole of the Bible.

### **The Resurrection: A Surprise?**

After Jesus had died on the cruel cross the disciples were dejected. Their hopes and dreams seemed to have been shattered. They had been robbed of their teacher and master, the one whom Peter had declared to be the Messiah, Son of the living God.

This was all about to change. Having been told of the empty tomb by the women, Peter and the other disciple (probably John) ran to the empty tomb and it is recorded about the other disciple that “He saw and believed” (John 20.8). Their reaction to the resurrection is one of joy and jubilation but should it have been a surprise?

Jesus had been preparing the disciples for His death and resurrection but they simply didn’t understand and were afraid to ask the questions. Very early in His earthly ministry Jesus spoke about what would need to happen.

In John’s Gospel we read that Jesus talked about the destruction of the temple and the fact that He would raise it up in three days. (John 2.19). In Mark’s Gospel (Mark 8.31 and Mark 9.31) Jesus was even more explicit in informing His followers what was about to happen. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” (Mark 9.31-32).

Despite all of this, the disciples were surprised and overjoyed when they came to realise that this was real. Jesus had been raised from the dead. He was alive!

### **The Resurrection of Jesus: Vital for Our Salvation**

Recently I listened to a person on the radio describing Jesus as a good man, someone who had a lot of wise and insightful things to say. This is absolutely true, but it denies the reality that Jesus is alive today and is

seated at the right hand of the Father. If Jesus was just a good man, we have little to be joyful about. In the first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul explains the futility of faith in Christ if Jesus is not risen from the dead.

“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

The Apostle Paul however continues with an emphatic statement: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.”

Our glorious hope is interconnected with the reality of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

### **The Resurrection: Joy, Joy, Joy!**

Some years ago, we used to sing a song called, “Because He Lives.” There is an interesting story behind the song. Bill Gaither (the author) was left feeling weak after a serious illness and was experiencing problems in his wider family. He had been betrayed by someone he cared about greatly, and life was very tough. His wife Gloria was pregnant and thinking deeply about their troubles.

Gloria writes... “Who in their right mind would bring a child into a world like this? I thought. The world is so evil. Influences beyond our control are so strong. What will happen to this child? I can't quite explain what happened at that moment, but suddenly I felt released from it all. The panic that had begun to build inside was gently dispelled by a reassuring presence that engulfed my life and drew my attention. Gradually, the fear left and the joy began to return. I knew I could have that baby and face the future with optimism and trust. It was the Resurrection affirming

itself in our lives once again. It was LIFE conquering death in the regularity of my day."

The first few lines of the song state, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives!"

In these days, people across this world of ours are experiencing such great fear and dread as we face constant threat from the Coronavirus.

Many people are grieving the loss of someone they love, and economic systems are shattered. At this time however we have a message of joy and hope founded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The challenge for us is this, do we experience the joy of the resurrection in our daily lives even when we are isolated from those we love, friends and family.

The scripture is clear, "In all things give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This is easy to read but not always easy to do when we are fearful and alone.

Just like Gloria Gaither in the story above, we too can experience our fears and concerns melting away and making room for us to experience once more the joy of His resurrection life.

I would encourage us all to stop a little today and think on our wonderful risen Saviour, asking Him to fill us with His joy, empower us with His Spirit and give us a heart of gratitude.

May the Lord bless you and your family richly.