

WELCOME 1 April 2018 – Easter '18 B

Good morning! and welcome to this wonderful Easter celebration! It's great to see you all here & it looks like God has given us a top morning to enjoy...And if this is your first time here...We're glad you made it & hope this becomes a place you feel ok & a part of all that's going on. Please hang around after worship...breakfast is coming & that'll make the morning complete!

Welcome to Living Water Fellowship...I'm John Guilfoyle the pastor here...If I haven't had a chance to chat with you yet this morning I hope we can do that here in a little while...don't forget...breakfast is coming..

Somebody once observed, "If the resurrection *DID NOT* happen, then nothing matters. You can go on your merry way. But if the resurrection *DID* happen, then nothing *ELSE* matters & you must deal with that above everything else." Everything Jesus ever said or did was either wiped out when he was brutally killed or proved true when he rose from the dead...If it's true that he lives (& death lost) then what does that mean for you...me...us...?

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, & through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. --- if the rez didn't happen then none of that is true...but if the rez happened & all of that is true...what a difference today makes...we'll explore that in just a few minutes..

But first...let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY/AFTER WELCOME

Lord of life; bring your word of life as a light to those in darkness.

Lord of peace; bring your word of peace to those enslaved by fear/pain/distress.

Lord of love; bring your word of love to those in need of comfort/hope.

Lord of eternal joy; be known through us as you work in our lives today and always. In the name of the risen Jesus Christ...He who is life...we pray...Amen

PRAYERS FOR EASTER

God you are powerful to save & gracious to save us. We give you thanks for your immeasurable love that is ours in Jesus Christ.

We praise you for his fingers that anointed blind eyes, for his hands that gently touched lepers, & for his arms that embraced little children.

We praise you for his smile that welcomed outcasts, for his frown that rebuked the arrogant, & for his tongue that told parables of judgement & grace.

We praise you for his obedience that took him to Jerusalem, for his trust that agonised in Gethsemane, & for his love that suffered at Golgotha.

We praise you for his lips that gave the Easter greeting, for his mercy which restored ashamed disciples, & for the joy with which he filled them all.

We praise you for the Saviour who has brought us here today, to fill us with wonder, love and praise.

Heavenly Father, throughout the church & around the world, make Easter more than an opportunity to satisfy our sweet tooth. Let it be an encounter with the living Jesus. Cause Him to penetrate beneath the level of familiarity, & awaken that which is lost & dying within each of us.

Lord Jesus, wherever this day death arrives with the roar of bombs or the rattle of machine guns, in the form of malnutrition & disease, with the squeal of car tyres or the shouts of an alcoholic brawl, despite the best of medical care & watched over by loved ones, little by little in the form of illness age or despair...Come Living Jesus with your life & light & saving strength.

Lord Jesus where death has left in its wake desolate loved ones, desperate orphans, or angry people looking for revenge... Come Living Jesus with your life & light & saving strength.

Loving God, engrave on our hearts, minds & souls that nothing can defeat your love, & nothing can sever us from the grace of the risen Jesus. Transform us such that we awake each morning with faith & hope restored, with joy abounding & with love readily flowing through every word we say & deed we do, to the glory of your wonderful name!. Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen!

EASTER '18 B – MAKING SENSE OF EASTER: THE SIGHT OF EASTER – MARK 16:1-8/1 COR 15:1-8

I think there's an unwritten rule in my house...you know how there are rules that are obvious & everyone knows them because you've talked about them...if you wrote 'em down & tacked 'em to the wall no surprise because you've said "this is the rule"...BUT THEN there are the rules that everyone seems to follow w/o ever talking about it...you just sort of see it in action because everyone does it? That unwritten rule in our house...that everyone does w/o a thought: "Thou shalt never be more than arm's reach from your book" Everybody in our house reads...A LOT. We love books. Novels...sheer flights of creative fiction. Love 'em. Historical fiction...that delicate balance of real/fanciful interpretation. Love 'em. Biographies, historical accounts, poetry, Christian literature...our shelves are full of 'em. And my kids all are always in the middle of it seems about 2 books at once. I love it. The printed word has power & majesty...not complaining...

Mark...is a biographer. We just read the last chapter of his biography of Jesus. The church calls those biographies (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) 'gospels' because that word means 'good news' & they are that...they are good news because they are biographies of Jesus who is himself God's good news for all...And we just read the last chapter. Mark 16:1-8...now there's more...12 more vss...but the oldest manuscripts stop @ vs 8...others likely added by the church later to make Mark's biography/gospel consistent w/ the other 3...

So what's going on in this last chapter? Well...3 women go to the tomb...Don't forget...these women were the ones who stayed to the bitter end with Jesus. The men may have scattered like rabbits before a header but the women had seen the results of the beatings & the flogging. They saw the crown of thorns bite through the flesh of Jesus' scalp. They watched in horror as the nails were driven through flesh & bone & into the wood of the cross. They heard the last words & watched the final breaths rattle out of Jesus' body. They saw the spear pierce Jesus' side. They knew He was gone. He was dead. Mark specifically tells us the women carried spices as they went to complete the anointing/embalming process that hadn't been fully completed after the crucifixion because of the encroaching the Sabbath. They went fully expecting to deal with the dead body of their dead friend.

And every step from their homes to the tomb would have been punctuated by 2 questions: Why? & Who? Why would he allow such horror when he could have fled to safety? Why would he build up their hopes to allow them be so crushed? Why...would God do something like this? Jesus clearly had God's blessing, God's favour...God's hand was his hand...Why? But also Who? Who will roll that honking big stone away from the tomb's entrance? Who's gonna help us?

But as they arrived, they looked up & saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go & tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died." The women fled from the tomb, trembling & bewildered, & they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. (terror & amazement had seized them; & they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.) What a lousy ending! As a biography this would never sell as a major motion picture.

This is the only resurrection story where Jesus doesn't make an appearance. And the 3 women utterly fail to do what they have been told to do by the angel. He greets them with the best news imaginable...*Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body...look he is not here – look he's outta here – look can you see Easter? AND he gives them 1 simple task...Now go & tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.* But instead of singing & dancing & shouting all the way to the fellas, they drop the ball...fleeing the tomb saying absolutely nothing to anyone. What a lousy ending!

For more than half of his narrative, Mark records Jesus predicting his betrayal, suffering, death & resurrection. Three times Jesus has explicitly told his followers that this is the moment they should be expecting. Everything else, according to Mark is simply prelude to this. The crucial "do-not-miss-this" part of the gospel is Jesus' death & resurrection...and now that that moment has arrived...nothing.

All the people who should know...don't. And those who do know "*fled from the tomb, trembling & bewildered, & they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened...*"

Oh...wait a minute...there is in fact someone else who now knows...

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was not just a great teacher – knows that he was not crucified for his teaching.

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was not just a fine moral example – knows that he was not crucified for his stellar morals.

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was not just a benevolent kind compassionate friend – knows that he was not crucified for his kindness...feeding hungry multitudes...blessing children.

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was not just a miracle worker – knows that he was not crucified for his healings or exorcisms or resuscitations or restorations of sight or mobility...

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was crucified because he chose that death to put an end to sin death & evil...that from the first garden on earth God had promised this day would come & Jesus died/rose to make it so...

There is someone else who knows that Jesus was crucified to make God's forgiving restoring love real for the world. Not only is God loving, but he himself is the definition of love (John 3:16, 1 John 4:8). God's love was not motivated by what he saw in us, but by what is inside of him. Even when we're unloving & rebellious, full of ourselves & demanding our own way, God is still love. He delights in transforming us by his grace & rescuing us by his love.

And there is someone else who knows that angelic message: *He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body*

That's you. That's me. I said it as we gathered...“If the resurrection **DID NOT** happen, then nothing matters. You can go on your merry way. But if the resurrection **DID** happen, then nothing **ELSE** matters & you must deal with that above everything else” Everything Jesus ever said or did was either wiped out when he was brutally killed or proved true when he rose from the dead...

If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead. – Timothy Keller

Without the resurrection, Christianity would be so much wishful thinking, taking its place alongside all other human philosophy and religious speculation.

Jesus Christ did not come into this world to make bad people good; He came into this world to make dead people live...to give his life as a sacrifice...a ransom.

Jesus walked into death & out from his grave like no one else in history. His promise was that all who trusted his powerful love for abundant life here & hereafter would receive just such a life. He alone declared every human life precious & valuable in the name of God who is Love.

Jesus said the Father's desire to save & bring you home to his heart was stronger than death...It is.

Jesus said death would not hold him forever...It didn't.

Jesus told his friends he would come to them again on the other side of the grave... and on that bright new morning every promise he had ever made was proven true.

Easter is about seeing all the promises of God kept in Jesus.

The promise that God's love is for all. The promise that death is not the end.

The promise that there is nothing that can separate you from God's passionate love for you, & his passionate desire for your good. The promise that the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead can redeem & transform every life...no matter how ruined broken distressed. *He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body...* Today is the day to trust that promise. Today is the day to see Easter for all its wonder & joy & hope...To see once & for all that God's love is for all & it is for you. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Now that you know...what are you going to do?

Sing...In Christ Alone while our offerings are received