

WELCOME 12th April 2020 – Easter '20 A

Matthew 28:1-10, Ezekiel 37:1-14 & Colossians 3:1-4

Good morning! Welcome to this wonderful Easter celebration! It's great to have you all here & especially those who might be at the On-line well of Living Water for the first time. We're glad you're here & hope this becomes a place you feel ok & a part of all that's going on. But even more we hope that sooner rather than later we're all together in the same place again! Today is **NOT** that day...yet!

But **TODAY IS** Easter...a day like no other.

Today there's light that scatters every darkness...

Today the tomb that held Jesus' body is, by the power of God, empty.

Today the stone that kept life pinned down is rolled away.

Today the stench of death & staleness of decay are blown away.

Today New life springs forth.

Today Love wins.

Today Death is defeated.

Today Peace is real

Today Joy is unbound.

Today Hope spreads, because Today Jesus lives. Life moves in its greatest triumph

We'll explore & experience that together today...we're glad you are here!

Today is a great day...

Let's pray...and then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, on this most joyous day we offer our thanks and praise to You;
Creator of heaven and earth, creator and lover of all humanity.

When we turned away from You, You sought us.

You spoke words of mercy and love through the prophets;

You promised to swallow up death forever to host a banquet of life for all people;

We praise you for Christ Jesus, Your Word made Flesh for us.

Born of Mary, He shares our life.

Eating with sinners, He welcomes us.

Leading His followers, He guides us.

Dying on the cross, He rescues us.

Risen from the dead, He gives new life.

Now in this place...let your life triumph in us, let your love fill & pour through us & let your joy overwhelm us. We pray in the Name of the risen Jesus Christ...Amen

EASTER '20 A – SEISMIC SHIFTS: LIFE MOVES

FAITH CHAT:

1. What's the hardest thing about your movements being restricted by virus prevention measures? Toughest thing about this season of quarantine?
2. How do you as a follower of Jesus deal with life's unknowns & uncertainties?

Ok...I know today is Easter...And any pastor worth his/her paycheque is supposed to share something dazzling & awe inspiring from the Easter narratives from one of the Gospels. We just read Mt 28:1-10...lots of great stuff there...preached on it a bunch... But I was struck by Ez 37 this week...and somehow it just feels like what we ought to hear on Easter Sunday in the Season of Quarantine...

The set up is this...God's people are up to their ears in trouble. Besieged. Under attack. Under threat. Shortages of the basic necessities of life. Their lives pinned down. Death stalking at every turn...So God takes his spokesman/prophet (Ezekiel) & plops him down in the middle of a valley of dry bones...dry busted up human skeletons as far as the eye can see & God asks what seems an impossible question: "*Son of man, can these bones become living people again?*" *Can these bones live?* Ezekiel is honest enough to admit he doesn't know. "*O Sovereign Lord, you alone know the answer to that.*"

In this last month I've felt that same sense of being overwhelmed by circumstances. No answers. No insights. No special wisdom. I appreciate his sense of uncertainty. I can testify to that same feeling of confusion & lack of any idea what is possible any longer. Can we? Can't we? Are we ever? Is life possible again as we knew it? I don't know...ask God...see what he says. I can just see Ezekiel standing there trying not to step on someone's eye socket & shrugging his shoulders shaking his head; "*Sovereign Lord, you alone know the answer to that.*" *I dunno? God this one's outside my pay grade...This one's bigger than me...There are just too many unknowns too many variables too many unseen threats & pitfalls...I just don't know!*

Every time I hear the latest rumour or the newest set of restrictions...updated positive tests, critical illnesses, deaths, job losses, business closures or bailouts... the debates about what is permissible or not permissible based on who's saying what when...I feel like throwing up my hands because it's just too much. Maybe we got us a whole internet full of Ezekiels today..."God...I don't know what to think or what to do or...You gotta give me more to work with here."

It's so easy to get trapped in the enormity of the moment...the magnitude of what we face in this season...the frustrations or the despair or the stuckness...This season feels so much like that valley where the dry bones...the signs of death & disaster just stretch on for as far as the eye can see...and then some more. Some of us live that way...chronic illness...longterm addiction...unbearable generational family strife...persistent unemployment...scars of many years...COVID 19 same song different verse?

So rather than getting stuck on the uncountable bones – the innumerable things lost in this current moment...the myriad threats & untold numbers of challenges...the multitude of obstacles to full living...I want to you remember 2 things just 2: 10 & 3. Can you remember that w/o writing it down? 10 & 3. You can bet your life your future your very existence on those 2 numbers...**BIBLES**

Watch...10X in these 14 verses from Ezekiel God commits himself to act on those dry bones...10X God says "I will/I am" & pledges himself to transform those bones. Note well...God is acting on **THE BONES**...How the circumstances resolve themselves is still undefined...but God's care concern compassion & power is directed on his people...those who feel dead dried up without hope or purpose or future *clean cut off*

You can write this down: God says to Ezekiel "*speak my promise to the bones...*"

1. I am going to put breath into you vs 5
2. I will put flesh on you vs 6
3. I will put muscles on you vs 6
4. I will cover you with skin. vs 6
5. I will put breath into you. vs 6

"breath" is the same word in Hebrew for "spirit" God promises to unleash his Spirit into the lives of his people to bring his desired transformation...to carry out his vision for his people...to bring into effect his will

6. I will open your graves vs 12
7. I will cause you to rise again vs 12
8. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. vs 12
9. I will put my Spirit in you, vs 14
10. I will return you home to your own land. vs 14

10X God promises restoration...renewal...re-creation. 10X God pledges his work in his people will bring new life... wholeness...goodness & blessing...God commits his work will effect a homecoming which always means he will carry/lead the redeemed into the fullness of HIS presence...*Ps 16:11 - You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living with you forever. – 1 Pt 3:18 - Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.*

When your own home begins to feel like a vast valley of busted up dry skeletons... when you aren't sure what you ought to do or not do...When fear & uncertainty are your daily companions...When you look at your neighbour as if they're a disease carrier...Let that river of "living water" bubble up & wash over you & pour through you. 10X God commits himself to you as one of his precious & beloved bought & paid for died for & risen for children.

In that moment, in whatever season, when the enormity of your life threatens to blast you into oblivion...to scatter you over the battlefield like a decimated army of dry bones...Count to 10...for the 10X promises of God's Spirit coming to bring you into his presence – to fill you with his power – to restore you to life in him.

And about that life...After you count to 10...then count to 3...

1. I will make you live again vs 5
2. You will come to life vs 6
3. You will live again vs 14

3X God declares that when he sends his Spirit...when he acts in our world in our lives it is to give life...to bring life...to restore life To. The. Full. And that starts today flooding out from the empty tomb. *"I came that you might have life & have it abundantly...I am the resurrection & the life...These things are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name."* Jn 10:10, 11:25, 20:31

What did we say earlier?

Today there's light that scatters every darkness...

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Today Love wins.

Today Death is defeated.

Today Peace is real

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Today Hope spreads, because Today Jesus lives. Life moves in its greatest triumph.

*"Don't be afraid!...I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.(I know you've entered today expecting death to still hold the field) He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he promised...Now, go quickly & tell the others still hemmed in by death that he has risen from the dead, & he is going ahead of you... Remember the 10X promise & the 3X pledge that life **IN HIM** wins the final victory...Don't be afraid...Go tell the others."*

Let's pray with that in mind...**Lord Jesus, Let your life reach its fullness in us. In your love create in us a hope in you and a trust in your promises so large and so deep that everything and everyone around us joins us in praising you for your grace which is without measure and your life that never ends. Amen.**