

## WELCOME 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 – Easter '24 B

John 20:1-18

Wilbur Rees once wrote a short “poem” describing how he saw most people approaching God: He wrote...

*“I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please,  
not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,  
but enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.  
I don't want enough to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant.  
I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.  
I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack.  
I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please.”*

Today we'll hear Jesus ask: “Who are you looking for?” If that's your answer, you're going to be sorely disappointed...because *He is risen!* means **JESUS IS LORD** over all things. And it means...

A day that began w/ heartbreak & tear-streaked faces is suddenly alive w/ joy. A day that started w/ the grim reminders of execution is now awash in exaltation. The resurrection is **NOT** something containable manageable restrained or simply personal.

The resurrection is **NOT** something way back when...an echo in human history...a memory of something long ago...a once-in-a-while revisiting of a familiar tale. Jesus is alive & sends us toward the world that does not yet know...has not yet heard...

*He is risen!* is always accompanied by... “...go find my brothers & tell them...” What has been done **FOR** you from now on lives **IN** you & works **THROUGH** you

*He is risen!* means **JESUS IS LORD** over all things & it means **YOU** are part of God's plan for the whole of creation.

You have the resurrection life of Jesus in you. What else would you look for?

Let's pray & then hear the good news of Easter!

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord Jesus Christ, you conquered death, rose from the grave & are alive for evermore. Help us acknowledge your living, loving, restoring presence with us at all times - in all things

By your Spirit speak to us...

- in every time of perplexity to guide & direct us
- in every time of sorrow to comfort & counsel us
- in every time of temptation to strengthen & inspire us
- in every time of loneliness to cheer & befriend us.
- even in the time of our death to lead us to glory with you on the other side.

Now in this place...let your life triumph in us, let your love fill & pour through us & let your joy overwhelm us.

We pray risen Christ in your Name...Amen

Let's hear the great news from Jesus' friend John...

## EASTER '24 B – THE TRUTH: JESUS IS LORD!

Leonie & I found out the other week that **our** son-in-law (the younger of the 2 handsome men in that photo) is getting his 1<sup>st</sup> green cap today...He's been tapped to preach for the Easter worship at the UniChurch @ UNSW tonight. His 1<sup>st</sup> Easter preaching gig. As father-in-law I was pretty excited for him & did what all good Fs-I-L should do... I gave him some unsolicited advice...that's what Fs-I-L do....give advice asked for or not

It was simple really...**Get** "*He is risen*" right & everything else is gravy. Don't try to be smarter, more clever, or more ingenious than *He is risen*...or you'll mess it up. **Get** "*He is risen*" right & everything else may not come up roses but that's the part that holds everything else together.

You see, as the sun rose that earliest Easter... as Mary climbed to a place she'd never wanted to be her highest hopes & most fervent dreams were smoldering ruins in her heart. The greatest religious system of her day & the most powerful gov't on earth conspired to destroy Jesus...& succeeded. Life & joy & hope as she & her friends knew it had come to an end. Jesus died a murderous cruel death on the cross. She saw every agonizing hammer blow as the nails drove through his flesh into the wood. She counted every drop in the river of blood that flowed from his wounds. She heard every last guttural cry until "**It is finished**" & he breathed his last.

**In** 1982, Sesame Street had a problem. One of the favourite human characters, **Mr** Hooper, died & the producers weren't sure how to tell 10 million viewing children that one of their loved Street people was dead. Considering their options they chose the truth. So on the day Big Bird walked out & said he had a drawing to give Mr. Hooper saying, "I can't wait to see Mr. Hooper again." Another cast member said, "Remember, Big Bird, we told you Mr. Hooper died." Big Bird said, "Oh yeah, I forgot. Well, I'll give it to him when he gets back." The cast member hugged Big Bird & said, "Oh...Big Bird, Mr. Hooper isn't coming back." "Why not?" Big Bird asked innocently. The reply... "**Big** Bird, when people die, they don't come back."

Mary would have gladly given anything to take away the gruesome moment when the condemnation was final & her friend was tortured & horrifically slain right b/4 her eyes. She would have given anything for that tomb to have been a dream from which she was waking. But she couldn't...There was no going back. The fact in the cold hard light of that first day of the week...early on that Sunday morning was that Jesus was dead. And death is irreversible. Death is irreparable. One who is dead is irretrievable. The grave & the living are irreconcilable. When people die, they don't come back. The fact in the cold hard light early on that Sunday morning was that Jesus was dead. **EXCEPT HE WASN'T.**

As Mary stood there gaping at the empty tomb that morning her expectations of the vast impossibility of the grave collided full force w/ the promise that he who healed lepers, allowed the lame to walk, gave sight to the blind & hearing to the deaf...who raised dead & embraced as his own the lost lonely least & lowly would stand in triumph over the unbeatable. Her certainty that she knew how this whole Jesus thing was ending slammed right up against the full glory of God's suffering & victorious redeeming restoring transforming power & love.

She didn't yet understand & the question from the angels & this stranger seemed ridiculous: "**Who** are you looking for?" Her dead friend Jesus, of course! The one she loved beyond anything else who'd been stolen from her by betrayal & cruel jealousy.

But when called her name she knew the truth...**He is risen!** means **JESUS IS LORD** over all things. Sin couldn't stop him. Death couldn't defeat him. The grave couldn't contain him. Hell couldn't hold him...**JESUS IS LORD** over all things. What she had seen in his life was now multiplied & magnified in his resurrection. Nothing in her life could be the same or unchanged...which means nothing in your life can be the same or unchanged. Here's what that means...

In a world that tells us pain is inescapable...He is risen means Jesus is Lord so your suffering is known & held in his hands & you will find comfort & peace in him.

- When you tell yourself that some wounds are too deep to heal some hurts too hard to bear...He is risen means Jesus is Lord so even scars give witness to the One who whose scars promise your healing.
- When chaos moves into your house - disorder makes a place at your table - strife sets up shop where you dwell...He is risen means Jesus is Lord & you have the strength & assurance to say "No. Not here. We have a different Master...a reigning King...a merciful Lord & no turmoil or tumult can shake our foundations or stand in our midst."
- When you believe some wrongs are too wrong to forgive...He is risen means Jesus is Lord & in him the worst this world can dish out was met by "*Father forgive.*"
- When your fears tell you evil has the run of the world...He is risen means Jesus is Lord & the greatest threat of the evil one is overthrown & you share that victory.
- When despair tears at your very being & you're convinced hope is an illusion & heaven a myth...He is risen means Jesus is Lord & hope in him not only anchors your soul but opens your eyes to his triumph & his power alive in you.

- When you like Big Bird or Mary start to believe death really is the end...He is risen means Jesus is Lord & no grave is strong enough, no power mighty enough & no darkness deep enough to separate you from the love of God who calls you by name, embraces you as His beloved & unites you to the Father forever.

"Who are you looking for?" If it's perhaps \$3 worth of God...some quick fix, easy answer, magic bullet, wishful thinking...Let me offer instead: *He is Risen!* which means **JESUS IS LORD** over all things & today's good news is always accompanied by... " ...go find my brothers & tell them..." What has been done **FOR** you from now on lives **IN** you & works **THROUGH** you. You have the resurrection life of Jesus in you. What else would you look for? Who are you going to tell?

**Let's pray...from one of the early saints...**

Christ is Risen: The desolate world will be reborn  
Christ is Risen: The spirits of evil are fallen  
Christ is Risen: The angels of God are rejoicing  
Christ is Risen: The tombs of the dead are empty  
Christ is Risen indeed from the dead, the first of all who have fallen asleep. Glory and power are his forever and ever.

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. Lead us to those who are not yet swept up into the joy of life with you forever that they too may hear the great news...He is Risen. Christ is Risen indeed...to the glory of your wonderful name! Amen.