

## WELCOME 20<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – Easter '25 C

Luke 24:1-12 & Colossians 3:1-4

I say this almost every year...I never get tired of these words: **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

I'm glad you're here this morning...we celebrate just like this every week...

**BUT TODAY** is special...It. Is. Easter & **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

Please stay with us after worship...morning tea is not far off & that'll make the morning complete!

In just a couple of minutes, we'll hear that when the women, who saw the empty tomb & heard angels tell them *Jesus is Risen*, go back & tell the other disciples what they've experienced...they get this: "**But** the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn't believe it." You know what...? I get that. I really do. I've done enough funerals. I've had enough friends & loved ones die - buried enough of our kids' pets... I get why it sounds like "*nonsense/idle tale*." A "resurrection" just doesn't fit my experience or expectation of death & I bet it doesn't fit yours either. The lens through which I most usually see life...doesn't include "resurrection." Exactly!

**"Why** are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?

*He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men & be crucified, & that he would rise again on the third day."*

Today...We celebrate a victory that first & foremost overturns everything that we call logical, natural & expected. Today...A whole new story begins as the tomb **IS EMPTY** & Jesus **IS** again alive among us. Not just the future but every moment <sup>b/t</sup> now & then for you...for me...for all creation **CHRIST IS RISEN!** are the words that transform it all.

**KNOW THIS:** From the beginning of time, the Father's **only desire** has been to share the fullness of his life <sup>w/</sup> **you**. His eternal plan from beginning to end is for **you** "*to dwell in the house of the Lord forever*." It's time to see everything through that lens!

Promised from forever...Jesus Christ crucified, risen & ruling over all things by God's grace & love...destroys death, forgives sins, & defeats the power of evil that plagues all humankind. From this day forward the door for us is wide open from bondage to freedom, from despair to hope, anxiety to peace, frustration to joy & from death to life...to a new & eternal future.

Today we see the **UNFILTERED VISION** of all creation restored, human lives redeemed, & every tomorrow bubbling <sup>w/</sup> hope brimming <sup>w/</sup> promise & overflowing <sup>w/</sup> joy.

*Let's pray then sing & experience this VISION again today...maybe for the 1<sup>st</sup> time...?*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Risen Lord Jesus Christ, you conquered death, rose from the dead & are alive for evermore. Reveal to us your loving presence <sup>w/</sup> us at all times - in all things

By your Spirit <sup>w/in</sup> us make us remember...

- that you are with us in every time of perplexity to guide and to direct us
- that you are with us in every time of sorrow to comfort and counsel us
- that you are with us in every time of temptation to strengthen & inspire us
- that you are with us in every time of loneliness to cheer and befriend us.
- that you are with us even in death to bring us to you & raise us to your glory at the last day.

Make today that day...when all things are made new & your life bears full flower & fruit in us...in your Name, for your greatness & the work of your kingdom we pray. AMEN

Let's celebrate our eternal future by singing...Be Unto Your Name

## EASTER '25 C – UNFILTERED VISION

Have you decided who to vote for yet? Have you even listened to the campaigning? Amid all the clamour & commotion...What you're really hearing is competing visions of the future. Ignore the noise & name-calling. Forget the minutiae of policy proposals & the *What's in it for me?* pub test. What you're really hearing is competing visions of the future. And I guarantee you...whoever you choose to vote for...wherever you mark the #1 on the ballot paper...**THAT PERSON** will tell you the other guy's vision is rubbish...bleak...crush the economy...devastate farmers...ruin the environment.

**WHOEVER** you vote for...**THAT PERSON** will tell you the other guy's vision is a disaster on skates...threat to democracy...*not who we are* as Australians...

How do I know...because we are surrounded by expectations & predictions of doom & gloom and visions of catastrophe every day...Nothing happens in our world but that someone will tell us the sky's falling...it's the worst it's ever been. As if our living realities aren't trouble enough...Pain & difficulties weigh us down like a stone. Grief & sorrow cover us like a shroud. Guilt/shame/grudge from the past, or anxiety/fear of the future can entomb us w/ seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel. The uncertainties of chronic illnesses, family turmoil, lifelong addictions, strife in our world...Some days you feel nothing you do makes a difference & you are absolutely powerless to have an impact...We are surrounded by expectations & predictions of doom & gloom and visions of catastrophe every day. *Tell 'em to ourselves...how bad it is!*

Which is why I understand why no one was sitting outside the tomb waiting for Jesus to rise from the dead...why no one expected resurrection...Life, joy & hope as the disciples knew it had come to an end. Jesus died a cruel murderous death & that was it...It was finished. Not 1 of the devoted followers, who heard Jesus predict this moment multiple times jumped for joy & shouted "*Hallelujah! I knew it! Just like he said!*" Not 1. The women go to the tomb to pack Jesus' body in spices & drench it w/ oil not to get him ready for his grand return to Jerusalem but to mask the smell of decay...to fake-away the stench of death. **EXCEPT HE WASN'T THERE...**

The women bring the news of Jesus' resurrection to the apostles Luke tells us; **But** *the story sounded like nonsense (idle tale) to the men, so they didn't believe it.* They thought it was an idle tale, nonsense. *Gk word is ἰηρος – "delirious"...like someone w/ a concussion or high fever or drunk...babbling* That's what the apostles think of the women's message. That makes some sense to me. Maybe it does to you as well. There is so much in our world & our lives that would lead us to conclude that the resurrection story...this Easter "thing" is an idle tale. We have seen, heard, & experienced ourselves enough that we are almost immune to the rez. What are the 2 certainties in life? Death/taxes. We don't ever say, "Resurrection." Hope is a foreign word that doesn't often get a

place in our vocabulary = "wish" Our functional picture of the world around us is: this is all there & maybe there ain't no more.

**EXCEPT...**The tomb was empty & the **only** explanation is "**He is risen from the dead!** Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men & be crucified, & that he would rise again on the third day." **And I LOVE this...NOWHERE** does the NT offer any explanation of what happened behind the stone tomb-door. All we get is "*He is risen from the dead!*" "**Remember...?**" This was always the plan...Jesus' death as ransom & redemption for all...triumph by sacrifice...victory by resurrection...suffering death to overthrow the grave...dying by evil to destroy the evil one forever & break evil's grip on every human heart.

*Remember what he told you...*

We take it as given that all things come to an end...But we know **TODAY** God doesn't intend that for us...ever...or now. Easter at its heart guarantees fullness of life is ours in the risen Jesus. Easter assures us God does not permit death to silence us forever or the grave to be our final stop. Easter is the declaration that evil's day will soon come to a fiery conclusion. Because Christ is Risen...the final verdict for us is not death, but life; not sorrow, but joy; not guilt, but forgiveness; not condemnation but love.

*Remember what he told you...* 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 & on that bright new morning every promise he ever made proved true. *Remember what he told you...* Jesus promised God's love was stronger than human sin – more tenacious than human rebellion...more enduring & healing than any human agony. Jesus Christ didn't come to this world to make bad people good; He came to this world to make dead people live...to plant his life in us now & forever...to spread his restoring love through us...to plant his peace among us by the power of his resurrection in us. Today: Jesus rises not just **FROM** the dead but **FOR** life w/ his people to transform our lives into signs of his.

You see...Once death is destroyed no other power has power. Once death's grip is broken no other bondage can hold. Once forgiveness & freedom have been granted, there is no prison where you must remain. Once new life breaks forth from Jesus' grave, old life/dead life/sin life/captive life/hopeless life/just getting through life is gone forever.

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beginning of time, the Father's **only desire** has been to share the fullness of his life w/ **you**. His eternal plan from beginning to end is for **you** "to dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It's time to see everything through that lens!

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Our world tells us the story of gloom & doom...Of looming catastrophe & visions of desolation...But **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

In him we see the *UNFILTERED VISION* of all creation restored, human lives redeemed, & every tomorrow bubbling w/ hope brimming w/ promise & overflowing w/ joy. The ancient prophet Isaiah saw the *UNFILTERED VISION* of God's great restoration...*this is the vision to which we cling...the story we tell...the promise toward which we live...*

*On that day the LORD of Heaven's Armies will spread a wonderful feast for all the people of the world. It will be a delicious banquet with clear, well-aged wine and choice meat dripping with marrow. There he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign LORD will wipe away all tears.*

**Isaiah 25:6-8**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!** It's time to see everything through that lens!