

Sermon 20-04-25 Easter Sunday

Luke 24:1-12

Imagine yourself in near the tomb in the garden.

A bit before 6pm, the sun is just rising, a group of women coming towards the tomb, carrying spices to look after Jesus body for the proper burial. As it was hastily put in the tomb on Friday afternoon before the Sabbath started.

But they find the tomb stone rolled away and when they went in there was no body!

Perplexed they suddenly see these two men in shining clothes, angels perhaps? Of course they were afraid!

And these angels seem to rebuke them:

- why do you look for the living among the dead?
 - It is as if they should have know that Jesus is not dead!
- He is not here: he has risen!

And then the angels reminded the women of what Jesus had told them many time:

- After Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah:
 - *And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Luke 9:22)*
- After the transfiguration and the healing of the demon-possessed boy:
 - *"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." (Luke 9:44)*
- After the rich young man could not accept Jesus call t discipleship:
 - *Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." (Luke 18:32-33)*

And now these men remind the women with very similar words:

- *Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'* (Luke 24:6b-7)

This convinces the women: "then they remembered his words." (Luke 24:8).

We then see the women depart from the garden in our imagination.

Nonsense

How do you feel? Is this convincing you? We do not yet see Jesus alive. We only hear that he is not here, because he is risen! He is not among the dead, he is with the living. There is not no need to linger in the graveyard. You will not find Jesus there! Anymore!

If you cannot believe, you are not alone. The other disciples also could not believe: it is nonsense!

That is the Kingdom of God: nonsense or folly to human thinking, but wisdom and purpose in the eyes of God!

We see Peter running to the tomb though, and he sees the same as the women saw earlier. The empty tomb. No body. Just some discarded grave clothes. But the absence of Jesus does not convince him either. But he is wondering what happened

Wondering

Wondering may be a good state to be in too. That at least opens possibilities. Something has happened, and it is not normal

Next part of the story

The story moves on and we leave that to next week, I believe. But we see how two people met Jesus on the road to Emmaus. And once they had recognised that it was Jesus, they hastily return to the other disciples. And they were greeted by the others by the statement: "*It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.*" (Luke 24:34). It is now the evening of the same day that empty tomb was discovered, and Peter must also have discovered the risen Lord Jesus Christ among the living. But we do not hear the details of that.

He is not among the dead, but among the living (Luke 24:5)

On Easter day we are encouraged to move our attention from the tomb to the living, as that is where Jesus is. And that is where Jesus is today! Here with us today! He is among us today. Do you believe? Have you met him among the living yet? Do you really want to?

It is over to you now. Would you say yes (again) to Jesus? He is alive, he is risen indeed!

Bishop Melito of Sardis, who lived in the second century, paints a compelling picture of my resurrected Saviour:

‘This is he who made the heavens and the earth, and formed humanity in the beginning, who is announced by the law and prophets, who was enfleshed in a virgin,

who was hanged on the tree,
who was buried in the earth,
who was raised from the dead, and went up to the heights of heaven,
who is sitting on the right hand of the Father,
who has authority to judge and save all things, through whom the Father made the things which exist, from the beginning to all the ages.

This one is 'the Alpha and Omega,'

this one is 'the beginning and the end,' – the beginning which cannot be explained and the end which cannot be grasped.

This one is the Christ.

This one is the King.

This one is Jesus.

This one is the Leader.

This one is the Lord.

This one is he who has risen from the dead.

This one is he who sits at the right hand of the Father.

He bears the Father and is borne by the Father.

'To him be the glory and the power to the ends of the ages. Amen.' *

Optional prayer

So if you want to pray with me today:

- Lord Jesus Christ,
- I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (pause)
- Please forgive me.
- I now turn from everything which I know that is wrong
- Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free
- Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift
- Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.
- Thank you, Lord Jesus

*Bishop Melito of Sardis, *Homilia in Passionem Christi*, 160–170 CE, *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 1 Origins to Constantine*, edited by Margaret M Mitchell and Frances M Young, (Cambridge University Press 2006), p.10