

Easter Sunday: Truly the Risen King!

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[0 : 00] I'd like to invite all of us to keep our Bibles open to today's passage. Let me open in prayer. Our dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your amazing grace and love that you have redeemed us by the blood of your Son.

And you have called us to be your children. And together today, this morning, that we can not only sing praises to our risen King, but to listen to his words.

And we ask that the Holy Spirit will take these truths that we hold on to so dearly. And that sometimes we have become so familiar to that it will be planted deep down in us, that you will cause it to bear much fruit to the glory of your name.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Hope. Hope is an expression of an expectation or a desire for something particular to happen.

Hope today is a sunny day. I hope I can pass my exams. I hope one day Malaysia can win the World Cup. And a lot of times, this kind of hope are things that we are unsure of.

[1 : 23] And we realise that actually hope is something very, very precious. One that can keep someone who is lost in the jungle, trapped underneath the rubble of a collapsed building, waiting in hope for someone to rescue them.

Yet we realise also that when hope is lost, it can crush someone to the point of committing suicide. When we read stories of people taking their own lives, we can see the common theme of hopelessness. And today when we read the news, when we scroll through social media, there are many sad realities that we see in the world today.

The war in the Middle East, in Ukraine, the earthquake in Myanmar, the trade war, or even the possibility of a world war in the future.

Even in our lives, maybe an accident has taken place. Critical illness. We lost a job. We lost a loved one. And all these events suddenly intrude into our lives.

[2 : 36] Like how my mother, 10 years ago, got a severe stroke and has been bedridden since. I didn't expect, I didn't think that that would happen.

And at that point, it felt like my world fell apart. Once I was talking to some juniors in the university, and one of their fathers just passed away.

While we were all talking on this topic of death, one of them said this, he doesn't like to talk about death because it's very sad. He said, I would rather watch Spongebob Squarepants and not think about all these sad realities of life.

For those who don't know what is Spongebob Squarepants, it's a funny cartoon character which is a sponge who lives underneath the sea. So when someone posts about the death of their loved one on social media, I've seen well-meaning comments like this, condolences to you and your family. The person is now in a better place. Christians, non-Christians have posted such comments before to comfort the grieving person.

[3 : 53] As much as people think and hope that they are in a better place, are they truly in a better place? Will we be in a better place after we die?

Because death is a sad reality that we all have to face. What do we turn to for hope? Or is it just a fool's hope? For the disciples of Jesus, all their hopes died when Jesus died on the cross.

The Messiah they hoped for to bring about the kingdom of God is now dead. That's it. It's over, guys. Luke chapter 23, verse 48 and 49.

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the woman who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

And now we enter into our passage this morning, which is starting from verse 50. It is around 3pm on Friday afternoon. Jesus hung on the cross, lifeless.

[5 : 12] And we are then introduced to one of the members of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin. And the Sanhedrin consists of the elite, the educated of the Jewish society, the lawmakers, the law enforcers, the religious leaders.

This was the group that was so desperate in wanting Jesus to be dead. And yet, what we see is that Joseph, who came from Arimathea, he was described as a good and upright man.

He was one of the few in the council that did not support the unjust crucifixion of Jesus. At the end of verse 51, we are told by Luke that he was waiting for the kingdom of God.

And Luke used a similar description when he wrote about Simeon and the prophetess Anna in Luke chapter 2. They were looking for the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament that the Messiah, the chosen one, would come to deliver them.

In the Gospel of John, we are told a bit more clearly about the identity of Joseph. In John 19, verse 38, later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus.

[6 : 38] Now, Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

So what we know from here is that Joseph was a secret follower of Jesus, even though he was a member of the Sanhedrin. And normally, the Romans, what would they do with the bodies on the cross?

They would lift them up to rot on the cross or maybe even get eaten by animals in order to deter people from rebelling against them. So at this point, Joseph had a choice to make.

Will he just continue to be silent about his faith in Jesus and go on living his wealthy, reputable life as the member of the council?

Or will he give Jesus a proper barrier and risk all that he has? For someone wealthy and reputable like Joseph to go to the Roman governor to ask for Jesus' body, that would mean everyone would know about it.

[7 : 54] It would cost him his reputation for publicly identifying with someone who has been convicted and crucified as a criminal.

It could even cost him his career as a member of the council. And he had to handle a dead body just before the sabbath began.

But what we see happening is that instead of remaining a secret follower of Jesus, he took courage. He asked for Jesus' body. He wrapped it in linen cloth, gave Jesus a proper barrier in a tomb that has never been used before.

And by taking this daring step of devotion, he fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53, verse 9, which is on the slide. He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death.

Though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit found in his mouth. Although many of Jesus' disciples responded in hopelessness, in fear, Joseph took his stand and confessed Jesus in his death.

[9 : 14] And we need to understand, Joseph was not like waiting or expecting that Jesus will rise from the dead on the third day. As we see later, Jesus' resurrection came as an unexpected event to everyone.

And brothers and sisters, will we identify with our Saviour who died the humiliating death on the cross in a world that is hostile against him?

Joseph finally understood that though his faith in Jesus is personal, it can never remain private.

Faith is personal because no one can make that choice for us to believe and follow Jesus.

We are not Christians because our parents are Christians or we are born into a Christian family.

God only has children, no grandchildren. And yet, many try to keep our faith private.

We are willing to praise Jesus in the church, but we are ashamed to proclaim him in the community that we live in. Are we afraid we will be treated differently because we let people know that we are Christians in our workplaces, in our schools?

[10 : 36] Are we ashamed to share with our loved ones about Jesus, Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection because we are scared that they may reject us or make fun of us?

And that's why we need to be reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus in Luke 9, 23-26. Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, son of man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Our faith in Jesus is a personal faith, but it is not a private faith. Now we see the narrative shifting from Joseph to the woman.

[11:43] the woman who watched Joseph burying Jesus in the tomb. In verses 54-56. It was preparation day and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The woman who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes, but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

So these were the woman who travelled with Jesus from Galilee and followed him throughout his public ministry. Although most of the disciples of Jesus have already abandoned Jesus during his crucifixion, they stay put all the way to the end.

Verse 55 brings out a very important point. The woman saw, they saw intently, they saw purposefully, which tomb was Jesus buried in.

How was his body laid in it? And this actually very much dismisses the accusation that the woman went to the wrong tomb on Easter morning.

[12:54] Verse 54 tells us and helps us date Jesus' death to Friday afternoon because the Sabbath begins before sunset on Fridays.

So if Jesus died around 3 p.m. on Friday afternoon, the burial of Jesus had to be completed before sunset.

On the same day, they had to remove Jesus' body from the cross, they had to wrap it in linen cloth, they had to move his body into the tomb and close the entrance of the tomb all before the Sabbath.

And this is why the woman did not have enough time. to anoint Jesus' body with spices and perfume on Friday. Instead, they only managed to prepare the spices before the Sabbath began.

And the reason why they anointed Jesus' body was not so much like the Egyptians who mummified the dead, it's rather an act of devotion to Jesus.

[14:01] And verse 56 also showed how faithful they were in keeping the Sabbath as God had instructed them to. And so this whole section about Jesus' burial, he appeared in all the four Gospels.

Why is the burial of Jesus such an important part in the Gospel, in our Christian faith? It is because the burial of Jesus is a very clear confirmation that Jesus actually truly died.

He did not just faint while he was on the cross and then he was brought down from the cross, put into the tomb to recover. Nor did someone else replace Jesus up on the cross as some religion claims.

Jesus' death was carefully confirmed by the Roman soldiers who did not break his legs to quicken his death, like the others who were crucified by his sight.

Instead, the Roman soldiers pierced his side and blood and water came out, showing that he has indeed died.

[15:12] In the Gospel of Mark, we are told that Pilate did not just give Jesus' body over to Joseph. He made sure that Jesus was truly dead before allowing Joseph to take his body.

In Mark chapter 15, verse 44 to 45, Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead.

Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died.

When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. The Roman soldiers, they were known to be expert executioners.

And Luke, along with all the other Gospel writers, wanted the readers, wanted us to know that Jesus has truly died. Why is this so crucial?

Because if Jesus did not truly die, that means he did not die for our sin. If Jesus did not truly die, that means he could not rise from the dead.

[16:17] Good Friday is not good without Easter Sunday. But Easter Sunday would not have happened without Good Friday. and so Luke showed us throughout his Gospel that Jesus was a real human being with flesh and blood.

Jesus' death was the ultimate proof of Jesus' humanity, of Jesus' incarnation. Because all of us, every human being, will face death.

As Benjamin Franklin once put it, the only certain thing in life are death and taxes. All have sinned, therefore all will die.

But Jesus, the sinless, perfect God-man, identified with our sinfulness and our mortality, so that he could save us from sin and death.

And now to chapter 24. What we see on verse 1 to 3 is that dumbfounded response of the woman.

[17:26] On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the woman took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

The first day of the week means that the resurrection, a Sunday, was the day of Jesus' resurrection. The woman already had prepared the spices on Friday before the Sabbath began, so they brought all these spices to Jesus' tomb in full expectation to find Jesus' body laid in the tomb.

They did not go to the tomb expecting to find an empty tomb. they became a witness of an event that they didn't expect to happen, nor did they cause it to happen.

And verse 4 tells us that they were perplexed, they were puzzled after seeing the empty tomb. They did not see the empty tomb and say, yes, Jesus rose from the dead. That was not their conclusion. Nothing at that point made sense to them. the Jesus they believed in. He was crucified, was dead, was buried, and now his body is missing.

[18:47] Luke, as a historian, he was careful to record the various weaknesses of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. As he mentioned in the beginning of his gospel, he wanted to write an orderly account to demonstrate the truthfulness of the things that he was writing about.

And we can see that when he recorded the woman as the first weaknesses of the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ. Because if we were to understand those times and place, women were not regarded as a credible weakness.

They were not allowed to testify in the court. In other words, if the gospel writers wanted to make a story believable, they want to make it up, using the woman as the first weaknesses of the resurrection won't help them.

But this goes to show that they were writing down and presenting the facts clearly, not trying to make things up. And beside that, we also see how Jesus gave value to women.

While the society looked down and mistreated women, Jesus elevated the value, the dignity of women in the ways that the world has not seen, by the way he treated them, by the privilege he gave them to be the first weaknesses of his resurrection.

[20:21] While the women were all still at a loss regarding the empty tomb, in verse 4, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

Who are these two men? We can get the answer later in chapter 24, verse 22 to 23. The two disciples walking to Emmaus said, in addition, some of our women amazed us.

They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was life.

So what were the women's response? They were frightened, they were dumbfounded as they heard the angelic announcement. And what did the angel say to them?

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen. He has risen. They assumed that Jesus' body was still in the tomb.

[21:25] That's why they brought the spices and the perfume. In other words, they were looking for Jesus' dead body in the place where the dead were placed. They were looking for the dead among the dead.

And what did the angels then tell the woman to assure them of Jesus' resurrection? In verses 6 to 8, 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.

Then they remembered his words. The angels reminded the woman what Jesus told them before he died.

Throughout the Old Testament, we find God constantly telling his people, remember his mighty acts, remember his promises, his warnings, remember the covenant that they have with God, his commands, remember you were slaves in Egypt, remember how the Lord your God redeemed you from slavery, remember, remember.

Why is remembering so important to us as Christians? Why did the angel tell the woman, remember what Jesus said? It's not because they had dementia or they had some short-term memory loss.

[22 : 59] It's just as how Jesus said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, in Luke chapter 24, verse 25, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

We need to be reminded because our hearts are slow to believe and quick to stray away from God. The angels reminded the woman that the resurrection of Jesus was a promise made and is a promise kept.

Jesus finished his redemptive work by rising from the dead, just as he said he would. And we can see that in Luke chapter 9, verse 22, which is on the slide as well.

Luke recorded Jesus for telling this, Yet for the disciples, their hearts are so clouded with sadness, with fear, because of their present situation.

The Jesus they had believed in and followed had died. All their hope, all their dreams for the coming kingdom of God is now buried with Jesus in the tomb.

[24 : 21] They now live in fear of the Jews coming after them. They lost sight of what Jesus had done and what Jesus has said. And so often we too allow ourselves to be blinded by life's troubles, by the worldly pleasure that we forget what God has so told us in his word.

Another year has passed and now we celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday once more. We know that Jesus died for our sins, that he rose from the dead.

But how have these truths shaped our lives? How have it transformed the way we live, the way we talk, the way we respond to troubles?

We need to be reminded, we need to be grounded on these truths all the days of our lives until our final breath. And after this supernatural encounter with the angels, in verses 9 to 10, we see when they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others.

It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. We see remembrance led to faith and faith led to proclamation.

[25 : 56] The women became not only the first witnesses, they became the first messengers of the risen King Jesus. And Luke took effort to list down the names of the women who witnessed all this.

People could verify for themselves the credibility of the woman's testimony. So with all that they have seen, all that they have heard, they proclaim it to the eleven apostles and to the other disciples of Jesus.

God chose to use the woman to proclaim to the apostles and not the other way around. If Jesus' resurrection was a fabricated story, it would be much more believable to say that the disciples first saw Jesus and then told the woman rather than what was actually recorded.

But why did Luke purposely withhold the names of the woman until the end of the anti-tomb narrative? It is very likely because he wants to compare, he wants to show the contrast between the response of the woman to the response of the apostles and the other disciples of Jesus.

Because in verse 11 and 12, after they heard what the woman said, they did not believe the woman because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up, ran to the tomb, bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves.

[27 : 27] And he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. And this shows again that the disciples were not expecting Jesus to rise from the dead, even though they know what Jesus has said and that Jesus had predicted his resurrection.

They were skeptical. They were doubtful of what the woman told them. And while the other disciples regarded what the woman said as nonsense, Peter decided to run to the tomb, see for himself what the woman told them.

And what does he encounter when he reaches the empty tomb? He sees the linen cloths that was used to wrap Jesus' body. And the position and the condition of the linen cloth was as though Jesus' body just passed through the cloth without anyone unwrapping the cloth.

So after he verified the testimony of the woman, he was described to be amazed by it. And yet, he still did not fully believe or understand what has taken place.

And that's why later on in chapter 24, we see how God continually and graciously showed himself to his disciples that he has indeed risen from the dead.

[28 : 51] He appeared multiple times to multiple people at different time when they were slow to believe and quick to doubt. He assured them with all the evidences.

One that we can see in Luke chapter 24, verse 37 to 43, when Jesus appeared among them, they were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, why are you troubled?

And why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I, myself. touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.

When he had said this, he showed them his feet, his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, do you have anything here to eat?

They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence. In the end, we see God opening up their spiritual eyes and their spiritual mind to see that Jesus is indeed the fulfillment of all that God has promised in the past.

[30 : 06] Do you see how God chose to use lowly women and men to be his weaknesses? The disciples were uneducated. They were not rich.

They were not successful by worldly standards. They had all kinds of flaws as we go through the gospels. And yet, God chooses to use them as the pioneers of the early church, as the messengers of his gospel, because that is how God works.

In 1 Corinthians 1, verse 26, brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards.

Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong so that no one may boast before him.

In our human wisdom, we often think, if I want to reach out to the rich, I need to be rich. If I want to reach the successful people in this world, I need to be successful.

[31 : 19] And as many of us in the Christian world become more educated, become more well-off financially, there's always this great danger that we are shifting our confidence from Jesus to what we can do and what we have.

God used the disciples mightily, not because of who they were or what they could do. It was always about who their saviour is, who their Lord is, in Acts chapter 4 verse 13.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished. And they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

They had been with Jesus. They walked with him. Now they trusted him. They followed him. Now they have the Holy Spirit empowering them. It was never about how able we are to serve God. but it's about the God that we serve. If anyone here still doubts the credibility of the resurrection account, I would like to invite you to be like Peter, who went to the empty tomb to verify the testimony of the woman himself.

[32 : 38] Don't discredit Jesus' resurrection just because it seems like nonsense to you. consider for yourself all the evidences that God has given us in the Bible.

Remember, God is not afraid of our questions. Are we afraid of the answers that he gives us? Will we go where the evidences lead us to?

the core of the gospel message is always about the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

our entire Christian faith rests on these factual and historical events. Either Jesus died or he did not die.

Either Jesus rose from the dead or he did not. And Apostle Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 15. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

[33 : 41] You are still in your sins. If only in this life we have hope in Christ. We are of all people most to be pitted. All that we believe in, all that we hope for, would just be a fool's hope if Jesus did not rise from the dead.

But because Jesus has indeed risen from the dead, we have a sure and living hope. A hope to face tomorrow, uncertain future, to face even death.

A hope that we will surely have our eternal inheritance, kept safe in heaven for us. Jesus' resurrection proved that he is indeed who he claimed to be, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who has taken away our sins, that his perfect once for all sacrifice for our sin has been accepted by the Father.

And that's why those who believe in him, those who choose to follow him, are safe from the bondage of sin and Satan. That's why we are free from the fear of death, from the fear of hell, because Satan and death are defeated enemies.

We will still die physically, but we do not grieve like the world grieves. that knowing all these truths, brothers and sisters, the question we need to ask ourselves this morning is this, do we who believe that King Jesus is alive, yet do we live as though Jesus is still dead?

[35 : 22] How do we do that? We do that when we allow ourselves to still be entangled with our sinful desires and our sinful habits. We do that when we chase after our selfish ambitions, our dream life, rather than advancing the kingdom of God and seeking after heavenly treasures.

Many want Jesus to be their saviour, but not as their king. Believing in the risen king means that we submit to his reign.

We long for his return. In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 18 to 20, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us to believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand and in the heavenly realms.

what does it mean to live in the reality of Jesus' resurrection, of this resurrection hope and power that he has given us?

[36 : 42] When we are alone in our rooms, where we have negative thoughts and temptations lurking around, when we are so busy and stressed out in our workplaces, in our schools, when we are dealing with our screaming, rebellious children or our elderly parents at home, when we have to face our harsh boss tomorrow, or our irresponsible colleagues, when we are deciding what course to take, what job to apply for, who to marry, where to settle down, what does it mean to live in the reality of resurrection, hope and power?

It means that we can respond to all these challenges, with a hope, with a love, with a peace that the world cannot give us and the world cannot take away from us.

It means that we can give thanks in all circumstances and be content with what we have. It means that we are not preoccupied with the temporal pleasures and comforts that this world offers us, but with the two things that God said will last forever, the word of God and the souls of men.

It means that as God's church, we are not a clubhouse, just coming together, enjoying one another's company, but we are a lighthouse, a lighthouse to love and serve our King together, to shine out the light of the hope that we have received, that we have experienced, to reach out to the lost.

brothers and sisters, the King has given us the Holy Spirit, he has given us the Great Commission while we wait for his return, to go and make disciples of all nations, and we are called to do this with the resurrection hope, with the resurrection power, because our King has truly risen.

[38 : 45] Let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, we thank you that our Lord Jesus is the risen King, the reigning King, and the returning King, that he will return one day and make all things right, all things new, and we know for sure that will happen because Jesus rose from the dead, because you raised him up from the dead, proving to us.

Indeed, you are the God that we can believe in, you are the God that we can hope in through life's sorrows and despair, and we pray, even as we go back to our homes, to our offices, to our schools, to the community, we ask that you help us, enable us through your Holy Spirit to shine out this resurrection hope and power, to be victorious over sin, and to truly live with an eternal perspective, knowing that you are going to return.

Thank you for this glorious hope. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.