

## EASTER SUNDAY MESSAGE

12 April 2020 – Rev Simon McLeay

Easter Sunday is the day of days, it is the pinnacle of the Christian faith, it is victory of God when Jesus rose living from the dead. Today is the day that we can know that God is Good and God is Great. That God can redeem all the brokenness of this world, because he has shown that even death has been overcome.

Firstly, Easter Sunday shows that God was able to rescue Jesus after the disaster of his trial and crucifixion, the corrupt authorities did not win.

Secondly, Easter Sunday means that all the promises Jesus made were not just talk, but were backed by the power of God.

Thirdly, Easter Sunday proves that God can forgive sin, that he can wipe the slate clean, all Jesus' claims were authenticated by his resurrection.

Fourthly, God has shown just how real he is, and how very much he loves us. O what a sacrifice and O what a success.

And fifthly, Easter Sunday says, there is more after the grave; O death where is your sting, O grave where is your victory?

One of my favourite villains in literature is lady Macbeth, she is as ruthless as she is naïve, her great line is *a little water clears us of this deed*; she says this just after she and her husband have killed the King. But if you know the story, the blood is not erased, over time their sin weighs more and more heavily with them and the blood starts to drive her husband mad. We are very aware of this at the moment with the virus, a little water cannot clean our hands, a long wash with soap is required; but even a good soap cannot purge us of sin and guilt. There are three pillars to Easter Sunday.

Pillar One: Easter is about guilt, it is about sacrifice, but most of all it is about forgiveness. The prophet Isaiah foretold the events of Easter, and foretold that Jesus' sacrifice would wipe away our iniquities.

Do you have regrets in life? Well, this is deeper than that; do you have mistakes you wish were covered over? Well, this is deeper than that; do you have habits, sins and compulsions that are trapping you? Well, this is deeper than that. Sin is best understood as an incurable disease, it lives in us and it lives in our community, it corrupts everything it touches.

Jesus' self-sacrifice – was vindicated on Easter Sunday, it is the only certain remedy for sin. If you are suffering with something that needs forgiveness, bring it to Jesus. He can heal. He can forgive. His is not cheap forgiveness, he gave his life for us and you have to be willing to do your part, but he can forgive.

Pillar Two: this is a real life historic story; this is not the Easter bunny myth. This is not something a great religious leader wrote down. This is a not a self-help mantra. Easter Sunday is a real event.

2000 years ago the women went to the tomb, fully expecting to see Jesus body there. But it was gone! Something had happened over night, God and history intersected in an amazing way. This is not anti-intellectual; this is evidence based. There was a real person named Jesus, the New Testament is a well recorded document, there are references to Jesus' life in contemporary writers and Jesus was real.

The story also confounds. If the early church was going to have written the story, they wouldn't have put Mary down as the first witness to the resurrection. In the Roman and Jewish worlds women's testimony was not considered legal. But Jesus appointed Mary as the first evangelist.

It was common for a tomb to be sealed by a rock, who moved the stone, it would not have been easy to move. There were Roman Guards appointed, they would have been at great risk for not keeping the body safe, yet the body has disappeared.

And not everything disappeared. The folded grave clothes lay there, as if Jesus had just disappeared. The story of Jesus' resurrection is strange because it records the intersection between two worlds. This world and the next world. At the heart of the Christian faith is a real world based event that challenges our perception of reality. Despite 200 years of denial, this is not fake news.

Third Pillar: the resurrection on Easter Sunday proved that God could raise people from the dead, but not just bringing people back to life, this was not a resuscitation, instead this was forward to life to another form of life altogether.

One of my favourite passages in the bible is the heart felt cry of JOB after all kinds of disasters hit him yet here is this righteous man who cried out saying I believe in God! In chapter 1 he could have cursed God and died, and still by chapter 19 he is holding on to his faith in God. I think its awesome. Job 19:25

*I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.  
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;  
I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another.*

Isn't Job great, he doesn't know how it's going to work, but he knows that in some real way God will vindicate him. As Christians in the same line of faith as Job we can say the same. We know that our Redeemer lives, and in the end He will return to a new heaven and a new earth, and then even after our bodies have been destroyed – in a bodily way we will see God.

Paul say it this way. In 1 Corinthians 15:42

*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

Easter Sunday is victory day. Easter Sunday is your victory day. We will overcome Covid 19, we will overcome the recession, and even more importantly God has overcome sin and death.

Hallelujah.