

9th April 2023 Easter Sunday

Jesus Has Risen

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ **'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'**" ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, **"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"**

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true!

The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

The Road to Hope (Luke 24:1-35)

G'Day Church Family

It would be good to have your Bibles opened at Luke Chapter 24.

There's the usual **outline** for you to **take notes** – if that helps you **concentrate**.

Let me ask **God** for His **help** and **guidance** first – let's **pray**...

Intro/Leslie and Lee

[Slide 1-Leslie and Lee]

Let me introduce to husband and wife - Leslie and Lee Strobel

Back in 1979 their marriage came under a great test.

Back then

Lee was an **atheist**

[Slide 2-Atheist and Agnostic]

An **atheist** is *a person who disbelieves in the existence of God*

Lee's wife **Leslie** was an **agnostic**

An **agnostic** is *a person who neither believes or disbelieves in the existence of God they are in the "I don't know category"*

[Slide 3-Leslie and Lee]

One day **Lee had the worst news** he could get as an atheist

His wife, **Leslie**, became a Christian

Lee said the first two words that came to mind **were a swear word and 'Divorce'**

He said *"I thought Leslie was going to turn into a self-righteous holy roller"*

But over the next few months, He said: *"I was intrigued by the positive changes in her character and values. So finally, I decided to use all my journalism and legal training and systematically investigate whether there was any credibility to Christianity"*

He thought to himself – *"maybe I can get her out of this religious cult she had just signed-up to"*

He spent 2 years investigating Christianity's claims – and **Lee saw** that the **key element of Christianity** came in the claims that Jesus rose from the dead. If he could disprove that – **then he could start to disprove the whole thing**

[Slide 4 – Blank Slide]

The trouble is – **we all have difficulty at times - believing something that seems unlikely** - and especially if we can't explain it – or it seems impossible to us?

A couple of examples spring to mind:

Some people have trouble believing that **Man landed on the moon at all!**

Some people have trouble **accepting the terrorism of Sept 11th – 911**

And some people still have trouble **accepting certain famous people have died or how they died:** There's all sorts of conspiracy theories about the deaths of JFK, Marilyn Munro, Elvis, Princess Dianna and Michael Jackson...

It's human nature – to **doubt**, to be **skeptical**, to **question** – and to try to **explain the unexplainable**

Good Friday

On Good Friday

We left **Jesus** – the **Son of God** – God's Chosen One – The Promised Messiah – the One who supposedly had come to save His people – **dead on the cross**

The **Superhero** had **died** –

His followers hadn't seen that coming – even though Jesus had told them it was going to happen!

Sometimes people don't want to believe something – because they don't want it to happen – that was the apostle's Peter's reaction when Jesus told the disciples he was going to die in Matthew's Gospel – 16:21-23

[Slide 5 – Matt 16:21-23]

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Notice here Jesus says **He will be killed** and **then on the third day be raised to life.**

And notice **Peter focuses on Jesus’s death** – which we did on Good Friday

And of course, Peter doesn’t want Jesus – his Lord - to die.

But I wonder how much Peter focused on Jesus’ words **about being raised to life on the third day?**

(pause)

We also said on Good Friday – what Jesus’ death means for those who believe in Him

It means - All our sins – sin being the thoughts, words and actions that disobey God’s rules – all our sins - were dumped on Jesus – the perfect God and Man – and Jesus took the blame and punishment for our wrong doing – and He died for them

So that we could have forgiveness of our sins and be back in a right relationship with God

But that's not **the end of the story!**

And so, we come to today's Bible passage -

And there are a **number of reactions to Jesus' death** - **AND** - **as we'll see a number of reactions to Jesus being raised from the dead!**

Let's have a look

Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-54)

Turn to Luke chapter 23 starting from verse 50

And we find **Joseph of Arimathea**

[Slide 6 – Joseph]

He's a good man – upright it says in verse 50 – which literally means he **followed God's rules and commands**

Even though Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council that condemned Jesus

– Joseph was **against their decision** **and** **was a supporter of Jesus**

And Joseph's being **waiting for the Kingdom** (in other words **waiting for the Promised Messiah to come**)

And Joseph **puts his neck on the line** by going to **ask** the Roman Governor **Pontius Pilate** for Jesus' body – in v52 – to give Jesus a proper burial

By doing so, Joseph is showing allegiance to Jesus – and saying **he believed Jesus was who he said he was** – and Joseph is prepared to put himself at odds with the other council members – **which could cost him his life**

Now - **you don't do that for someone who is a fake or a fraud** – do you?
(pause)

Women, Angels and Apostles (23:55-24:12)

When Jesus died

Some of the **women followed to see where his body was laid (23:55)**

Because they **wanted to prepare his body for a proper burial**

[Slide 7 – Women]

They **followed him from Galilee** – they **love Jesus** and they are **loyal to him** – they are **not going to desert him** – even after his death

Now some people today argue - that **Jesus wasn't really dead**

But **the women clearly believed He was** – they want to prepare His dead body!

But it is too late on Friday evening - **because the Sabbath starts on Friday evening at 6pm**

And they **can't prepare His body on the Sabbath** – because it's a **day of rest**

So they **return to the tomb on 1st day of week (Sunday)** – see **Luke 24:1**

But they **found the stone in front of the tomb has been rolled away** – and there was **no body** – see v2-3 of chapter 24

[Slide 8 - 2 Men/Angels]

Then **2 men dressed in clothes that gleamed like lightning** (John's Gospel says angels) **appeared to the women** – and they make the most incredible statement in verses 5 & 6:

Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

And the women are reminded in v7 what Jesus had said to them in Galilee – from Luke 9:22 – when Jesus said this about himself:

²² ...”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.”

When Jesus says He will do something He does it!

[Slide 9 – Women again]

Importantly – in v8 – **the women remembered** – the penny is starting to drop – the **lights are coming on** – maybe Jesus has risen like He said He would?

The **women race off to tell the remaining Eleven Apostles and other disciples** – v9

Now it's worth mentioning that in Jewish culture – **sadly and wrongly, women were not seen as credible witness** – if you wanted to prove something was true – the **evidence from women would not do!**

So why would Luke even bother to mention the women's evidence – unless it was totally true!

It's also a great blessing for the women – that they are the first to hear about Jesus' resurrection – especially because of their faithfulness in following Jesus from Galilee and not deserting Him – even when he was arrested and killed.

[Slide 10 – Apostles]

Unfortunately, and not surprisingly – in v11 – **the Eleven apostles didn't believe the women's evidence** – it seemed like a load of nonsense to them –
Sometimes men – are not good at listening to women – and get themselves in all sorts of strife because they don't!

Sometimes it's hard for us to believe something – **that seems unlikely or unbelievable**

It reminds me of a story that Dina van Beek told me a few years ago...

About a child coming home from school and there was a circus in town

And an elephant was on the loose

The elephant managed to pick up the boy's schoolbag with his trunk and swung it around a few times and then the elephant trampled on the schoolbag

The boy wasn't able to do his homework that night

The next day when he went to school – the teacher asked him for his homework and he said he couldn't do it because an elephant had trampled on it

The boy was sent to the principal for telling lies

The principal phoned the boy's Mum – only to find out the story was true!

Back to our passage – and the **Eleven apostles** – are having trouble believing the women's story that Jesus is alive!

But one of the Eleven - **Peter**

Has **little light globes going off in his head** and he **raced to the tomb** – in v12 – and only found the strips of cloth that had wrapped Jesus' body – and **Peter went away wondering**

[Slide 11 – 3 Reactions]

So here we have **3 reactions** – reactions that are **typical of today**

The **Women** – **take the angels words as true and believe** (and remember the angels words are God's Words because angels are God's messengers) – **the women believe Jesus is alive even though they can't explain it – that's called Faith!**

The **Apostles** – are unbelieving – **they think it's a load of nonsense**

And **Peter** – **starts to wonder – can this be true?**

Remember our friend Lee – the **Atheist – journalist and legal guy** – I mentioned at the beginning – **he spent 2 years investigating Jesus' death and resurrection.**

Here's what he said after 2 years:

[Slide 12 – Lee's verdict]

In the end, after I had thoroughly investigated the matter, I reached an unexpected conclusion: it would actually take more faith to maintain my atheism than to become a follower of Jesus.

And that's why I'm now celebrating my 30th Easter [2011] as a Christian. Not because of wishful thinking, or the fear of death, or the need for a psychological crutch, but because of the facts.

The Men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-35)

Now the author of our passage – **Luke** – knows this is **still hard for his readers to believe** – so he goes on to present more evidence that Jesus has risen from the dead

We find that in **Luke 24, verses 13 to 35:**

[Slide 13 – 2 Men on the Road to Emmaus]

It's still the same day – the 1st day of the week – **Sunday**

And **2 of Jesus disciples** are **walking** along the **road** heading to **Emmaus** – 7 miles from Jerusalem

And they're **chatting** about what's happened –

Then suddenly – **Jesus is walking alongside them** – but they are kept from recognizing him straight away

And when **Jesus asks** them what they're talking about

They are **quite sad** –

They've **lost Jesus** – their friend - a **prophet of God** and a **powerful teacher in word and deed** – and he's been **crucified by the religious leaders**

They'd thought and hoped – **he was the One who would redeem his people**

By redeem here – they thought as many did – that **God's chosen One – the Messiah** – would come and deliver the people from evils of every kind – and that included getting rid of the wicked rulers of Israel – the Romans –
But now Jesus was dead – **how could He redeem them?**

And they were left wondering – especially as it seems some of the women have been to the tomb and **Jesus' body is not there?**

Now some may argue that Jesus' body could have been stolen – **but wouldn't Jesus' enemies produce the body** to disprove the claims that He had risen from the dead?

So, with all this going on inside the 2 men's head

Look at Jesus response in v25-26

He **shows from the Holy Scriptures** that the **Messiah had to suffer and to die**

Then Jesus tells them – v27 - **the whole Bible is about Him!**

And the Bible clearly reveals - that **Jesus did come to redeem the people from all evil** – all the evil in their hearts – all the people's sin – **which He fixed on the cross** – so that all people have to do is say sorry and **believe Jesus did it!**

When I became a Christian and read the Bible – from cover to cover – **that's what hit me** – **it all checked out and cross referenced** – and it seemed

impossible to my Winnie the pooh sized brain – **not to be true** – **it's so believable!**

And that's what our friend Lee the Atheist did – he **spent 2 years checking it out** – and he's legally trained – and if there's a problem or loophole – **he'd find it.**
But he didn't!

Luke's evidence continues – Jesus shares a meal with them – **verse 30** – and then the 2 men recognized him – **their eyes are open to who Jesus is** – **That's what the Bible does to us** – it **opens our eyes to Jesus** – because it's all about Him

But **then Jesus disappeared** -v31– **Jesus has more resurrection appearances to make!**

These 2 men – **don't hang about** – it's evening now – but they head back 7 miles to Jerusalem to tell the apostles and the other followers that they've seen Jesus risen from the dead!

Jesus is alive – and **this news can't wait till the morning!**

They must tell the Apostles [The Eleven] the Good News right now!

Challenges

[Slide 14a – Challenge 1]

So, I'd like to leave us **two challenges** this morning

First Challenge

When Jesus talked to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus – He said the Bible was **all about Him** – so my challenge is for us to read each book in the Bible – and find where it refers to Jesus.

For example...

Where is Jesus in the book of **Genesis**? [Jesus is the **Word of God** that created everything; He is **Eve's offspring** who crushes Satan, He is **like the Ark** who saves people....]

Where is Jesus in the book of **Exodus**? [Jesus is **the Passover Lamb**; He is the **only one who can keep all of the commandments...**]

And so on...

There are **lots of answers** – I'd love to hear what you find!

In reading your Bible in this way – and finding Jesus – it will help with my second challenge...

[Slide 14b- Challenge 2]

Second challenge – **We have the most incredible news** – that Jesus rose from the dead that first Easter Sunday and He is alive and in Heaven – and that means all who believe in Jesus' death and resurrection – **can have eternal life and live with Him in Heaven.**

It's news that can't wait until tomorrow morning to be told – **it must be told today - and then every day! Who will we tell today?**

Why do we need to tell this news?

Because **it's a matter of where we spend Eternity**

2 things came into world – through Adam and Eve’s disobedience towards God

2 things - **Sin and Death**

Sin was paid for on that 1st **Good Friday**

And the **receipt for that payment was on Easter Sunday** – when the tomb was empty – and Jesus gave us a ticket to Heaven – and fixed our death too!

The apostle Paul says this about Jesus’ resurrection and what it means from 1 Cor 15 verse 53-54:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ *“Where, O death, is your victory?*

Where, O death, is your sting?”

Let’s pray...

Father God, we give thanks for the events of that first Easter. Your precious Son has paid the punishment for sin once and for all – and He has won the victory over sin and death. Thank you, Jesus!

Enable us and equip us to tell this Good News.

Happy are the feet that spread this Good News!

In His Name, we pray. Amen.

Benediction (John 20:29)

As much as we’ve heard all the evidence of **Jesus’ resurrection**.

We don’t actually **need any evidence** – do we?

We could just **have faith**.

Let me leave you with these words from Jesus from **John 20:29**

After Jesus appeared to Thomas – who believed Jesus had risen – and said Jesus was His Lord and God!

Jesus said to Thomas: Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Amen.