

# The King is Alive!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now I want to look at this passage today as a follow on from last week. And in many ways for those of you who are here last week, you might think, well how can, how can you follow on from last week?

How can you follow on from the powerful evidence of the Spirit of God at work with us as we stood on holy ground, didn't we?

It was that great sense that we were standing on holy ground. As we looked at the story of the crucifixion and as Corrie preached with great power in the Holy Spirit about the crucifixion of Jesus.

Humanly speaking, obviously you can't top a story like that, the real reality of Jesus Christ and his death. But we do come to the resurrection without which the cross and the crucifixion is devoid of power and of meaning and of significance.

And Paul the great apostle, he knew that of course, didn't he? When he speaks in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 17 he says, for if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised.

[ 1 : 07 ] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. Your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. So we come to something when we look at the resurrection of Jesus that is crucial to our understanding of truth and our understanding of our own walk of faith and with whom we walk and what it means.

And I'd like to look at that for a little bit this morning. The meaning of life is bound up in the resurrection of Jesus, the meaning of your life and my life.

As we are confronted daily with death sometimes of people very close to us, sometimes just as we hear about it and almost shrug our shoulders at its reality throughout the world in which we live today.

As we strive for peace in our hearts and lives and for joy, then we come to this most significant of facts. And I'd like to look at two things in looking at this chapter.

I'd like to look at the nature of truth as we have it here and also the nature of faith and relate that to our own experiences and to our own walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 23 ] And if you're not a Christian then to challenge you about these things and about the importance of coming to believe in and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the nature of truth.

We believe clearly that truth can be known, that truth just isn't something out there that is unattainable and isn't fixed and isn't sure.

We believe truth can be known and that truth matters and that Jesus Christ Himself is the channel through which all truth is revealed.

I am the way the truth and the life, He says, no one comes to the Father but through me He made this astonishing and powerful claim to be the truth as well as to recognise what the truth was.

And with that context, I want to remind us of the historicity of this account of the resurrection. Some people shrug their shoulders in broadly Christian circles and will say, well, it doesn't matter if Jesus actually rose from the dead, it's symbolic.

[ 3 : 29 ] No, it's not. It is historical and it is supremely significant and important that we recognise it, not just as a symbol of something that I've never quite grasped what it could be a symbol of if it wasn't real, but that it is a real historical account.

We have four accounts of the resurrection and they're conflicting. They don't all say the same things. And some people have taken that to expose the folly and the contradiction of the gospel that the gospel can't possibly be true.

There's one angel sometimes, there's two angels, there's one lady, there's two or three ladies, there's different accounts. But that to me, and clearly as we see the nature of truth then as four different gospel writers narrate a historical truth from four different avenues and angles and from four different directions, they will highlight and pick out certain things.

And that will add to the authenticity rather than take away from it. We'll see clearly here in a moment that John focuses very much a cameo on Mary.

He doesn't say that she's the only woman there, but he's focusing on her for a specific reason. It is clearly written as narrative and not as myth. It is written historically.

[ 4 : 52 ] The significance of eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus is central to the New Testament and to the New Testament account. The fact that Mary and the women were, as we've said before here, the first witnesses to the resurrection gives it that sense of authenticity because in making that kind of truth up, at that time you wouldn't have chosen women to be the authentic genuine witnesses because their word was not taken as law in a law court.

Interestingly the race to the tomb between Peter and the beloved disciple. People say, well, there must be great significance in that race. Who won? Who came first?

Why did they run so fast? Why didn't one of them go in? Don't think there's any great spiritual symbolic significance about the race. It's just recording what happened. Two lads running to the tomb.

One was faster than the other and it's just recorded as fact. It happened. It's there. The folded clothes that we have, again significant as a historical fact, belying the rumour of a robbery of Jesus Christ from the tomb, that they ripped his body away and took it.

Either grave robbers or indeed the disciples themselves. It wasn't a scene of chaos. It was a scene of perfect order. A scene of complete control.

[ 6 : 20 ] The fact of their being, historically nobody ever found, is again hugely significant because the enemies of Jesus Christ in the early days of the Gospel and the church, when they heard these unschooled, uneducated men speaking in power about the resurrection of Jesus, would have done nothing, would have loved nothing more than to produce a dead body to say, here he is, this saviour that you say has risen.

The enemies of Christ would have done all that they could to search out and find this apparent hidden body that was resurrected. The guards, the search, the transformed lives, all speak of a historically sound and strong account of the resurrection of Jesus.

And we know from Scripture, from the truth of Scripture, that this was the divine plan. We sung about that in Psalm 18. We hear about it in Psalm 16, about in almost shadowy terms the reality of a resurrection from Genesis 3, the great protangellagium of Genesis 3, where the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent and all the Old Testament teaching and all the hope of the Old Testament and all the promise moving forward towards this great truth.

And Jesus himself spoke of it clearly, even though the disciples didn't interpret or understand or take in what he was saying, Matthew 16 verse 21.

From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribe and be killed. And in the third day, he raised again.

[ 8 : 18 ] He spoke about it in the upper room. The nature of truth. Jesus Christ, we said it as we introduced our worship tonight, this morning.

He is risen. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, the most significant and stupendous fact of history, the most unique fact of history, the author of life that could not be held in death, who chose to die, but who was empowered to be resurrected from the dead on the third day, as he claimed victory and as he made sense of everything that had happened on the cross in our place.

Marvelous power of Jesus Christ, the power of His great love for His people, that all who will put their trust in Him will live, even though they die, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That great reality for us is that we are powerless in the face of death, aren't we, in the face of ageing and a lot of you are very young here, probably don't think too much about it.

But it is one amazing area in life where we are utterly and completely powerless.

[ 9 : 51 ] And yet we have here Jesus Christ who encourages us to put our trust in Him so that His power and His life becomes our death for us, if we will allow it, is a megaphone that speaks to us in our weakness and in our vulnerability and in our spiritual poverty about His riches and about His love and about His grace and about His power.

Jesus Christ is alive. Jesus Christ has authority over you today because of this great fact. Jesus is relevant to you today because of this great fact, even though you may feel He isn't.

Jesus' grace is sufficient for you today and His power is what you need. So we have the nature of truth revealed in the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, that we maintain that.

Let's not drift into some kind of meaningless symbolism and distrust of the Word of God that is given to us to reveal timeless truth of the person of Jesus Christ.

What we do also see here, something of the nature of faith. I believe that John specifically focuses on Mary here and we have with Mary a kind of glimpse into the nature of relationship between individuals and with Christ Jesus.

[ 11 : 34 ] One of the things we long for here is for people to come with faith. People who don't know Jesus to meet with Jesus Christ, the risen Savior, and to come to faith.

That's what we long for. We long to see this church packed out with people that will come through these doors in whom God is already working to meet with Jesus Christ through His Word and through His person.

And we do see a little bit about the nature of faith, exhaustive by any means, but a little bit about the nature of faith in the interaction between Jesus and Mary.

I think we can learn and we do learn that faith and understanding of truth sometimes are not in the same place.

They differ in verses 8 and 9 of the chapter. We have this significant fact. Then the other disciple who commentators and who is generally believed to have been obviously John, the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in.

[ 12 : 43 ] And he saw and believed for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their home. That is generally taken as being an indication of him believing in the resurrection.

It's not really signifying simply that he believed what Mary had said or he believed that what she said was accurate, but there's a deeper sense in which there is faith there, that he believed that Christ was risen from the dead at that point, but yet that he clearly didn't fully understand how that related to the scripture prophecy and also to the theological framework that was later to become more clear with regard to the resurrection.

And we know that later on, of course, the apostles recognized and understood and believed in the resurrection and linked it to Old Testament teaching.

Peter very powerfully in the sermon in Pentecost which Tom is looking at this evening speaks about the resurrection and he quotes from Psalm 16. And so there becomes an understanding from the Old Testament exactly that this is what Jesus was to do, was to be raised from the dead.

And of course they remember Jesus' own teaching. But there can be a lapse that can be a gap between faith, between putting our trust in Christ and fully understanding what that means.

[ 14 : 22 ] In fact, I think there always will be. I don't think we will ever fully understand the truth of the cross or the truth even of the resurrection and maybe even in glory we'll continue to be understanding and learning and growing.

But let us not be people who regard faith as dotting all the eyes and crossing all the t's and saying well I can't possibly trust in Jesus till I absolutely understand everything.

I've got problems with evolution or I've got difficulties with science or I'm not sure of the Bible in this point or I don't understand fully the atonement and the length of it. And we wait and we wait and we wait until some time somehow our brain is stuffed full of information and understanding and then we go, oh yeah now I can believe.

I've ironed out all the problems and all the difficulties and I'll never have any more doubts again. That is not how it works. We are asked to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The understanding will be there and will come and will grow. I remember very vividly a great young guy in my previous congregation who had a wild life, no that's maybe a bit harsh, but he had no Christian input in his life, he had no knowledge of the gospel, he was a police officer and he was married to a girl whose parents were Christians and he came to church one Sunday, it was a communion Sunday and he came to church.

[ 15 : 45 ] I think it might have even been a service on a Saturday night before communion, I'm not sure why he was there and it may have been, there may have been a couple of weeks lag between the whole thing, but he believed, immediately he believed.

He knew Jesus Christ was risen, he knew that Jesus Christ was his saviour, he knew he needed a saviour and he believed and he wanted to sit at the Lord's table and he said I have no idea what it means.

I don't understand it all. It doesn't, I just haven't grasped it yet, but I know that I've been transformed. I know Jesus Christ is risen and I know as my saviour and he's gone on to become obviously a believer who has grown in his knowledge and understanding that faith and understanding don't often dovetail at that level and don't wait until somehow you've got unassailable knowledge of everything before you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Trust without all the answers, grow and take that simple step of faith. We complicate things too much, particularly if we've been born and brought up in the church and we're waiting for some flashing light to come and to give us all the understanding we need and Jesus says simply believe.

This is what has happened, believe and entrust your life to Him because it is clearly belief in the facts, isn't it? There's the facts that are here before us and there's a deep spiritual element to that but it is facts that we saw.

[ 17 : 20 ] Mary saw, John saw, Peter saw, they saw these facts and they believed them. The eye witnesses the historicity that we spoke of earlier, the narrative.

It is all important and it's believing not just in historical facts that are obvious but also to spiritual facts, an unseen spiritual world, the supernatural world of angels and of demons and of truth and of lies and we believe the words that come from Jesus Christ and His truth.

So there is truth that we cling on to in the nature of faith. But what we see here also is that faith is deeply personal and I think that's what we have here is a deeply personal account.

It's not giving all the facts, it's not speaking about everyone who is there. For those of you who like football, sorry, it's another football illustration. I don't know if you even get it now but on Sky TV, which of course we actually do have, we didn't used to, football.

It used to have player cams where you could press a red button and it would just focus on one player in a game. So there would be a camera on one player and you could watch him all the time rather than watching the whole game.

[ 18 : 37 ] And that's what you have here. You've got a player cam on Mary. You've got Mary being focused on at the expense of everything else because John is wanting to reveal the interaction between her and between Jesus.

Very personal, this is Mary who herself was healed from demon possession, Mary Magdalene. A loyal to Jesus to the end, in the upper room, at the cross.

Yet, at this point, confused and misled by various things, longing at various points to know something, to know some hope in the darkness.

You know, I think it's so interesting that she says that the tomb, she's not in the tomb, the disciples run back but she stays there and she looks weeping into the tomb.

You know, at that point there's not much hope and there's not much joy in what she's doing. And then we have the question she meets with the angels, it's almost a shrug of the shoulders.

[ 19 : 41 ] She doesn't seem too effaced by the reality of these angelic beings, maybe her past and her past in demonic possession would have given her that insight into that unseen world.

They say, why are you weeping? Why are you crying? And then of course she hears the same question second time from the gardener as she presumes, who are you looking for, he says, and then he speaks her name, Mary.

And of course she at that point recognizes who Jesus is. So it's a really deeply personal interaction between Jesus and Mary at this point and it does remind us of a couple of things.

It reminds us of the importance of seeking for God in our lives. Who is it? Jesus, the gardener, the gardener, is that significant?

What Corey was saying last week, but the garden and the garden tomb and the great creator God, the gardener. Jesus says, who is it you're looking for?

[ 20 : 52 ] Mary, you're looking for the wrong guy. You're weeping, you're mourning for someone that you think is dead, that's been taken, been stolen, they've taken him away, who's she speaking about?

Probably the leaders, the officials, the religious people of the day. But she's looking for the right person in the wrong way. Mary, Mary.

And she recognizes who he is. But there's that longing and seeking. And sometimes it can be that we are seeking and looking, but we're looking for the wrong God.

And we're looking for someone who is an idol. We're looking for a Santa Claus figure. Or we're looking for someone who will give us in this life unbridled riches and joy and happiness and wealth and a nice partner and a great house and a good job.

And all the things that we might think we want from a Savior. And it might be that we're looking for someone who's dead, not looking for the risen Christ.

[ 22 : 05 ] But it does involve seeking after him. And it involves coming to know him personally. That telling of her name, Mary, is hugely significant, isn't it?

Because for Mary it changed everything. There was instant recognition. Now we don't know why she didn't recognize him before. Maybe she couldn't see because of the tears. Maybe she didn't look up at him. Maybe she didn't recognize his voice.

Maybe he was different because he was resurrected as it would appear to be the case. But anyway, as he called her name, it changed everything. She could see him. He communicated.

He spoke with her and he let her know that he knew her. This was the risen Christ. And she came at that point to know exactly who he was.

She worshiped him on that first day of the week. And she was transformed in her life because of that.

[ 23 : 06 ] She saw him. She heard him. Now the nature of faith involves that. It involves seeing by faith the risen Savior, not seeing physically as Mary did, but seeing by faith the risen Savior and knowing and hearing his voice and responding to, my sheep know my voice and will follow me.

And he calls on us to follow him. And he repeats that call. So maybe you've been a Christian for a long time today and you're sitting at the moment.

I just on the edge of just drifting from him. You're just moving away. You've had enough. He's let you down allegedly and you're giving up his sheep know his name and respond to his call and follow him.

And he's calling you again to follow him. And that nature of faith, both being intensely personal is also transformational.

So there's an indication here that is unfolded as the New Testament is given to us. That coming to Christ transforms our lives.

[ 24 : 21 ] Now here Mary is instructed by Jesus not to touch him. And there's all kinds of different theories as to why. Because just in the next section before the end of the chapter he says to Thomas, touch me, touch me.

See that I'm real. And yet here it seems to contradict us. He's don't touch you. But in Mary's case it seems to be that he is indicating that Mary don't look back to what it used to be. It's not the same kind of relationship.

Yes, I'm risen. Yes, I'm still physical. But it's not going to be the same from now on because I haven't yet ascended. It's not just that you can touch me and be near to me as it was in the past.

But actually by my spirit I will indwell you because I'm going to send the spirit and he will indwell you. And the relationship is changing Mary is different.

You will have internal power. The power of the living God, the power of the triune God in you because I will give the gift of the spirit to all who believe.

[ 25 : 22 ] It's transformational. Don't touch me because life is different from you for you now Mary. And so twice, how often have we said it from the pulpit here that things are repeated in the Bible are usually because it's important.

And so the angels say through, why are you weeping? And then Jesus, the gardener says, why are you weeping? Because she was to be transformed.

She was weeping and mourning over someone who was dead. And Jesus and the angels are saying, why are you weeping for someone who's dead? Because I'm alive. And the weeping was turned to joy.

Because it's the most significant fact that changes our whole experience because we don't mourn for those, for our Savior as if He's dead and powerless and live like that.

You know what sometimes we live like that. We live like we're mourning as Christians because we've got a real rubbish, powerless Savior who can't do anything and we blame Him for everything in our lives.

[ 26 : 21 ] And yet He's saying, don't mourn. Don't weep because you have a great and risen Savior in Isaiah. One of my readings from this week, obviously relevant, I guess, in the eyes of those who put together the readings this week, Isaiah 25 and verse 8.

A glorious passage on this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well refined.

He will swallow up on this mountain, the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

Why are you weeping? That's the message of Easter Sunday. Now it's not to say that there are not times when we weep. There are people that we've already mentioned today who know and understand the reality of weeping.

But we also know that that weeping can be, the tears can be wiped away by the living God in Jesus Christ and that death for the believer is not the end and that there is eternal life because of who He is.

[ 27 : 39 ] This is for us a day of joy. Is it for you? Is it a resurrection? And the truth of the resurrection? A means of great joy so that supposing you are taken today there could be great rejoicing because you will live and we will know eternal life and resurrection because of Jesus.

So the nature of faith reminds us it's transformation. And lastly, very, very briefly, the nature of faith here is something that is to be shared. Jesus tells her that she is to go and tell the others, go and tell them about me.

I'm sending out, I'm sorry, I wouldn't like that. I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Go and tell my brothers.

Isn't that great? Jesus, the risen Saviour says go and tell my brothers. Go and tell my family. Go and tell them that they are now part of my family with the Father and go and tell them that they are part of my kingdom.

And believers, this is Mary going to other believers at a very early prototypical stage in their Christian lives and He's giving them encouragement at this point.

[ 28 : 58 ] Man alive, do we need encouragement? So we need encouragement day to day and for one another to go and share that truth of Jesus Christ and the risen Saviour that we are part of something great, that we are part of something eternal, that we are part of Jesus' family, that Christ intercedes for us, that He is risen to be with the Father and we share in His promises.

It's a great thing. And sometimes we're just flat and defeated when we're away. We're kind of stuck in an upper room as these disciples ended up being for fear of the Jews who are afraid and timid and yet we need that great encouragement.

Go and tell my brothers. Go and tell my family. And Jesus is our great elder brother. And isn't it others generally need to know today, that gospel truth, as we witness we want people to come in.

We want people to believe who's going to tell them. It's got to be you. It's got to be you guys. You've got to tell them. I've got to tell them. Nobody else is going to tell them. They're not going to just walk into church.

They're going to have to be told. This is great good news. I've seen the Lord. Who is it that you're looking for? Encourage people to know and understand this great Savior, Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 10 ] Amen. Let's pray briefly. Heavenly Father, we pray and ask that you would help us to know you better. That we would understand this resurrection truth, this great and glorious truth.

That we wouldn't just stick it in our Christian diary on Easter Sunday and have a hurrah of a day and then forget the realities of the risen Savior every day, every moment that we don't worship and pray to a dead God and a powerless God.

We worship and we serve the one who is ascended the right hand of the Father who is sovereign as we've been seeing in Ephesians over all things and who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

May we not take sometimes our puny unbelief and shake our fists heavenwards at your dealings with us as if somehow we know better, as if we have a better plan and a better purpose.

Forgive us for being deceived by the reality of sin in our hearts and for listening to the lie of the evil one so often.

[ 31 : 15 ] We pray rather that you would deepen our faith, that we would cling on to the truth and be lovers of the truth, that we would hear your voice speaking to us and that we would rejoice as those whose lives are being and have been transformed by meeting with Jesus.

Amen.