**Easter Resurrection!**

**The Empty Tomb**

**20**Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.**2**So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

**3**So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4**Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5**He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6**Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7**as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8**Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9**(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10**Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

**11**Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12**and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

**13**They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” **14**At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

**15**He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

**16**Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

**17**Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

**18**Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

**Happy Easter St Luke’s!**

What fantastic Easter worship – thank you to the Holcombes for spending time recording for us and uploading so we can worship together. I hope your journey through Holy Week has been inspirational, and I hear many of you have engaged with the worship we have provided and shared various creations on Facebook.

This is an Easter Day like no other…… but we should say this every year! We have been forced into different circumstances, and ‘normally’ we would come together, decorate the church, go ‘all-out’ and raise the roof of St Luke’s.

Well this year, we are raising the roof of our own homes as we worship together from the place we base ourselves. I am also mindful that for some, a life of isolation is pretty close to what some people experience much of the time, or those who are persecuted and have to meet in secret. Let us never forget the benefits and luxuries we have in being able to meet together – and however much we might hate technology, it has enabled us to remain connected…. So maybe give thanks the next time you shout at your computer!

God is as much with us here as He is anywhere. I can’t wait to hear your stories over the past few weeks, and how life will never be the same again as we embrace the future together.

So, to the **Bible reflection** today.

We have journeyed this week with our soul reflections – from adoration, our journey through life, just ‘be-ing’, seeking God’s will (discernment), eternal life, and how we can be ‘link’ people (Saturday’s devotions I sent through explains what I mean by ‘link’ people), vital for the Kingdom of God.

Now, we come to the empty tomb – that was just what it was – EMPTY!

Empty means:

* **Jesus is alive** – not he *was* alive, He IS alive! It’s continuous, present and future tense!
* **God’s promise has been fulfilled** – HAS been, not will be (although will be fully)
* There is **life beyond death** – which gives us HOPE! As the first line of a poem by Emily Dickinson says, “Hope is a thing with feathers that perches on the soul that sings”….
* There are **places to go beyond the grave**, whether in isolation or not – God’s not finished with us yet!

Mary went to the tomb – she saw the stone had been removed and SHE RAN! She **ran first in fear**, wondering where Jesus had been taken…..

Peter and the other disciple then also started running…maybe in **confusion and disbelief…** finally the other disciple **SAW AND BELIEVED.**

Many are fearful – we’ve seen that in panic buying that peaked and then dropped as people became aware that their fear was to be short-lived.

Miroslav Volf, a Croatian Protestant Theologian, says:

*“When a bacterial or a viral pandemic like Covid-19 breaks out, the social pandemic of FEAR is not far behind. That’s partly because when we see others fearing, we catch the malady of fear ourselves and partly because the culture of fear has weakened our immunity to fear. Parallel with the pandemic of fear, there is a pandemic of denial. But the danger of Covid-19 is real; neither the ostrich strategy nor the bravado of invincibility will work. Instead of denying the danger, we need to conquer fear..”*

Let’s not catch the malady of fear – let’s grip onto hope and let it grow feathers and attach to our soul.

Mary stood **grieving** – she saw the angels and conversed with them in broken honesty and truth, then turned around – and **SAW JESUS** (but not realising it was Him)… this shows Mary’s **bravery and courage** despite her fear.

As soon as **Jesus says her name** – she recognised Him…**and then she’s instructed not to hold on to him** as He needs to fulfil the scriptures and go to the Father, but to tell his brothers what’s about to happen now.

So Mary responds - she proclaimed she had seen him and He said these things to her.

**Mary conquered fear through her encounter with the risen Lord.**

**We can conquer fear through our encounter with the risen Lord.**

God’s knows us by NAME.

Do we turn around and metaphorically see Jesus standing there?

Is he right behind us, beside us, with us, before us?

What is our reaction to the fear we may experience?

Do we conquer it through our encounter with Jesus?

Do we recognise Him when we hear Him call our name?

What would we like to say to Jesus today?

How will we respond to what He asks us to do as a result of meeting Him again today?

He is risen, He’s ascended, HE is alive - WE are alive, and we have work to do…..

So, this is how we can work from this day onwards:

* **Pray**
* **Plan**
* **Prepare** for when social isolation restrictions are lifted
* **Share words** on texts, whatsapp, social media
* **Worship** – create the space at home
* **Keep in touch** round the world via the internet – whatever our love/hate relationship is with such media
* **Be inspired** – with our own experiences, and those of others. There are some wonderful stories of hope surfacing around the world.

This global pandemic, has crushed our world, but not our faith.

**Our faith is a resurrected faith and we can speak life and light into people’s lives. To the broken hearted and the grieving, to the sick and dying, to the recovering and the healthy….. to everyone. Everyone has a part to play and a purpose in the world, and Jesus needs our hands and our feet and our voices, so let’s take time to listen to Him and respond with a heart full of love and action not fear and fleeing….. let’s be a Mary today – and respond with bravery and courage as we recognise Jesus in us, and do what we were born to do – be a light.**

**Amen**.

*The next song to listen to reminds us that we are and can always be a light – and how best to be that light? Be like Jesus, who is the light of the world. Risen, ascended, and will come back again to reunite us forever. As the song says we were born to shine and be a light, whatever the world throws at us.*