

The power of his resurrection

Luke 24.1-12

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Hallelujah! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

St Paul, in his letter to the church in Philippi, wrote some 20 years after the glorious Easter morning, that his desire was 'that I may know [Jesus Christ] and the power of his resurrection.' (Phil 3.10)

Paul wants to know the 'power' of his resurrection. The word power in Greek is *dunamis* - our word dynamic, and dynamite, comes from that word.

The resurrection of Jesus is a dynamite that blows away old ideas, lesser powers, even the cobwebs in our mind. And it makes us people with a power inside. It gives us an inner energy.

What happened on that Easter morning was powerful. Let us spend some moments to focus on the power of the resurrection of Christ. It was -one- a powerful event, it has -two- powerful meaning, and -three - it empowers us today.

1. Powerful event

First - it was a powerful event.

The disciples of Jesus were huddled together, depressed and afraid. Jesus was dead.

And their fear was, I assume, that after the Jewish sabbath was over, the Jewish leaders might now go after them - the followers of Jesus.

You might define the disciples as afraid, confused, depressed, without direction. Let's agree, those are feelings that were normal in their circumstances. All seemed lost.

Feelings we sometimes also have, when things in our life and around us seem to go very wrong.

The first followers of Jesus who were brave enough to go into the streets, in the early morning, were women. Mary Magdalene. Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Maybe they were a bit more fearless than the men.



When they arrived at the grave, they saw that the stone that covered the entrance to the grave had been rolled away. Something very powerful had happened.

John, in his description, was more precise and wrote that the stone had been taken away. As if someone had lifted it out of its groove.

Matthew describes how that happened. He writes, 'there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.'

Something very powerful had happened. The Roman guards were useless against so much divine energy.

Then, two men in dazzling apparel spoke with the women at the grave. Their appearance was so powerful that the women fell to the ground, frightened.

And those words of these two messengers from God... 'Why do you seek the living Jesus Christ here in the graveyard? He is not here, he is risen!'

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The women then went back to the group of frightened disciples, who still huddled together with the doors firmly locked. And when the women told them about what happened at the grave, they thought it was an 'idle tale'. That is polite bible language for 'rubbish'.

The women believed what they saw; the men did not. This seems to be normal. Worldwide, even today, women seem more active in matters of faith, and we men can learn from them!

But then, Peter and John seemed convinced that something strange had happened - maybe someone had stolen the body?

So they hurried to the tomb, and there they saw something very powerful. They saw the linen cloths by themselves.

Remember how Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, after the death of Jesus, had taken his body to a tomb? They had wrapped the corpse of Jesus in a linen shroud, and they had filled that linen body with 25 kilos of myrrh and aloes.

So many spices. In those days that was only used for very important people.

Merrill Tenney, a former American professor of New Testament and Greek, explains the grave clothes as follows:

In preparing a body for burial according to Jewish custom, it was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the armpits to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices, often of a gummy consistency, were placed between the wrappings or folds. They served partially as a preservative and partially as a cement to glue the cloth wrappings into a solid covering.

This is important for understanding what Peter saw in the grave. He saw ‘the linnen cloths by themselves’.

First, if people had stolen the body of Jesus, they would never have taken the linen of Jesus in the grave. That would have taken too long - because it had become like cement around him. It was like an iron cocoon around the body of our Lord.

So what did Peter see? Some people think he saw the linen cocoon in the body shape of Jesus. Others think Peter saw all linnen neatly unwrapped.

In either case, the body had gone. Peter, before his own eyes, saw the impact of the power of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had simply left anything that could hold him back, behind.

Here we have the explosive, the powerful story: The grave is empty, the body was not snatched, the stone was powerfully taken away from the grave - and this in spite of a lot of Roman soldiers guarding the place.

Peter went back to the disciples. What did he tell them?

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2. What does it mean

But now, what does all this mean for us?

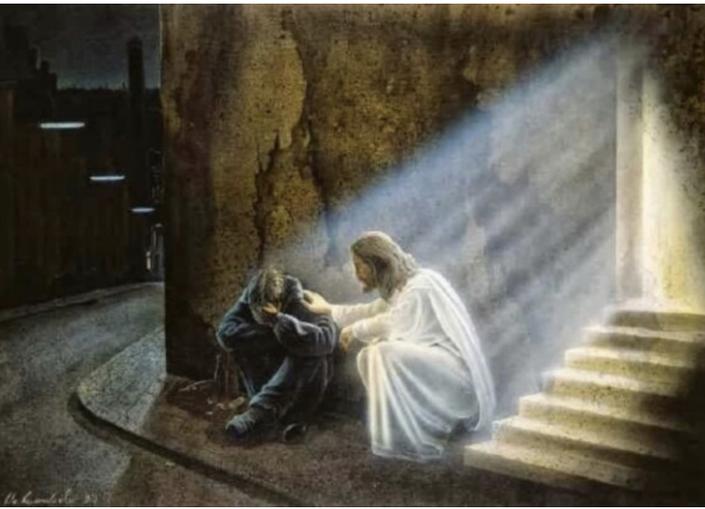
Death is strong, an awful enemy, and we will all lose the battle eventually. But we have hope beyond the grave because our God and Jesus Christ are stronger than death!

We have hope beyond this life.

But the resurrection of Jesus also gives us hope in this very life.

Let me ask you, what is stronger, your worries, or death? Yes, death is stronger.





Your worries can stop, but death is inevitable.

What is stronger, your sickness? Or death?

What is more powerful, your financial problems, or death?

What is stronger? Terrorism or death?

What is stronger, that nasty boss of you, or death?

What is stronger, Brexit or death?

What is more powerful, how depressed you feel, or death?

Death is stronger than all problems we may face. Death cancels all those problems, it wipes them out, and death is the end. Death takes us all. Death is the only sure thing in life. We will all die.

Well, the other sure thing is that the taxman, de 'belastingdienst', finds us all. But even the Belastingdienst is not as powerful as death...

But if death is stronger, more absolute, more devastating, than your problems, your sickness, your boss, your fear of terrorism, your fear of tomorrow, then we have great hope.

Because Jesus conquered death. He has shown he is stronger than our worst enemy.

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This means that Jesus - our Lord - is more powerful than any problem that you face today, or tomorrow.

3. So what must we do?

First, look at the empty tomb again.

Where is Jesus? He is alive! Stronger than death, stronger than our enemies, stronger than our problems, stronger than our worries.

When we go through hard times, we have to remind us of the facts. And the most important fact in our human history - is that the grave of Jesus is empty.

So we can trust in him and in the power of his resurrection. Take your worries, your problems, your sorrows, your tears, and lay them at his feet... Because he lives, we can face tomorrow. We are people of hope.

Realise, that all those problems you face, are problems on this side of the grave. But Jesus has shown that he has the power to wake us up on the other side of the grave, in a new life.

That does not make us blind and deaf for the suffering in this life. But it does give us hope.

And we can even rejoice in the midst of our storms. Our lord is always stronger; he does take care of you, now and eternally for death is not the end.

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So the crucial thing for us is to be always connected with him. He is life, He is powerful, He is our hope. Connection with Him means being safe! It means forgiveness, it means God sees you as he sees Jesus, his perfect and righteous Son, it means you have eternal life with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where is Jesus now? In throne of God. We celebrate this on Ascension Day, in 40 days time. He is with God in his throne, and that is where you will be if you stay connected to him. It is, in a sense, where we are already today. We are seated with him in the heavenlies, Paul writes to the Ephesians.

That is not to blind us for today's evils, but this realisation - we belong to the eternal side of reality - does give us a wholly optimistic view of where our life is going.

Conclusion

Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God.

This is why with joy and confidence we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. By his powerful resurrection he has shown that all things we may fear in life and death, are not as powerful as Jesus Christ our Lord. Our life is safe in his hands, now and forever.

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+Amen