

### EASTER DAY – THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

(John 20:1 – 11)

**Let Us Pray:**

***Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.***

Text: John 20:1 – 11.

*<sup>1</sup>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. ... she told the disciples, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb.... <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples went back to their homes, <sup>11</sup>but Mary stood outside the tomb crying.*

Christ is risen! ... (response) **He is risen indeed!**

Dear friends in Christ,

St John records the following observation in his Gospel account of the first Easter: “<sup>10</sup>Then the disciples went back to their homes, <sup>11</sup>but Mary stood out-side the tomb crying.” No doubt, many of you have experienced similar feelings of grief and loss as you stood broken-hearted at the graveside of a loved-one.

In our lifetime, haven't we seen TV images of men and women weeping for their loved-ones who have been entombed in collapsed buildings following an earthquake? Or buried under the wreckage wrought by a cyclone, or the utter devastation of a tsunami?

My friends, there is no shortage of tombs or tears in our world even now, for the coronavirus has killed over 25,000 world-wide. But what we do have a shortage of in this world is real hope. Not the false hope of pious sounding wishes, but the real hope that comes from the certainty that death is NOT the end. The certainty that there is a real answer to the fear and hopelessness facing us and the world every day. Yes, the grief and sorrow that cause us to weep just like Mary.

The good news is we do have an answer! We do have hope! You see, the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead means that we have a Saviour who has met our enemy – death – and won! Indeed, we have a Saviour who gave His own life in order to deal a mortal blow to death itself. Then on the third day He was raised to life, never to die again. Indeed, our most terrifying enemy – death – has been defeated.

So, my friends, no matter what tombs we must face from now on we can be certain that death's grip on us cannot hold you, me, and all who are in Christ. When death darkens our doorstep Christ, the Son of God, will rebuke it saying: *'Release my child, for I have atoned for his and her sins; you have no claim on them.'* And like the powerful, creative Word spoken at creation, we will rise bodily from death to life eternal. Thus, it's for this reason – and only this – that the Church proclaims, *"Christ is risen!"*

Why? First and foremost, it's because Christ Jesus is our hope! Because millions have never heard of His victory over death, it's the Church's mission (i.e. yours and mine) to proclaim it loud and clear. You see, like Mary, all we see are the tombs: all pain and suffering, the struggle and disease, especially death and defeat. It all looks and feels terrifying – and all so final, too!

But on that first Easter morning, one word drove out the darkness that shrouded Mary Magdalene's soul and restored her hope. When Jesus spoke her name, Mary, she recognised it as the voice of her Lord, and immediately her tears of sorrow changed into tears of joy.

Why? Because her Redeemer was alive! Indeed, at the sound of Jesus' voice Mary's sadness and grief gave way to joy and hope. And so it is with us for as Jesus says: *'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.'* (Jn. 10:27) So, like Mary, when sadness and grief shrouds our hearts in times of death and defeat, hearing the voice of our Good Shepherd will also dispel our darkness and gives us hope and joy.

Even now, the presence of the risen Christ restores our confidence and inner peace. You see, at every baptism we hear Jesus' voice releasing us from death – raising us to new life as He joins us to Himself. And as we are pardon-ed, we again hear Jesus' voice releasing us from sin and raising us to new life.

Likewise, when we eat Jesus' Body and drink His Blood at the Lord's Table we hear His voice releasing us from our sin and brokenness, and filling us with His righteousness and life. Thereby making every day an Easter day. You see, even though we still live in a world of pain, disease and death, where Jesus is present there we can still live in joy and hope, in confidence and peace.

Now, that's quite a change! But don't be surprised because it's the fruit of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil in our lives. For not only does Christ's victory mean eternal life, it changes how we live, grieve, and die. You see, even though death did its worst to Jesus, it lost! That means we can live confidently, knowing that no matter what death can do to us, it will lose again.

Yes, my friends, Christ IS risen. One day – like Mary – as a beloved child of God you will hear Jesus calling your name. Your ears will know His voice, and then you will rise from your grave and go from this life to the next. You will go from this valley of the shadow of death to the Paradise which Jesus prepared for you, and join with the angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven, singing praises to our Lord and Saviour sitting on His throne and shining in all His glory. **Amen.**

Christ is risen! ... (response) **He is risen indeed!**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Ernie Kiss  
12 April 2020