

Sermon Transcript from 20th April 2025 – Easter Sunday

Sermon TLDR

In 9pt.

On Easter Sunday, the sermon began with a reading from John Chapter 20, highlighting the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jim reminded us about the significance of Easter and the joy it brings due to Jesus' resurrection, which was first discovered by Mary Magdalene. Mary came to the tomb early in the morning and found it empty, prompting her to seek Jesus, whom she initially mistook for the gardener. Upon recognizing him, she called him "Raboni" and conveyed his message to the disciples.

The sermon emphasized the disciples' initial fear and confusion following Jesus' crucifixion and the subsequent joy they felt upon seeing the risen Lord. It stressed the importance of faith in Jesus and his resurrection, which reconciles humanity with God and establishes righteousness.

Jim shared personal reflections on his journey of faith and the transformative power of grace, contrasting their past with the new life they found in Christ. The sermon concluded with a call to love one another as Jesus has loved us, urging the congregation to embody the teachings of Jesus in their daily lives. Through faith and the Holy Spirit, believers are encouraged to live righteous and fulfilling lives, embracing the peace and salvation offered by Jesus.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/Dkra-PmxMSk?t=2585>

Sermon Transcript

That's a very apt prayer to bring to my mind the things that I've prepared.

I've been reading in John Chapter 20, which is a continuation of the messages we've been having on previous Sundays, been looking at the Gospel of John. And today we come to this resurrection.

Let me first of all say how good it is on the music side to have the combo today, the two Pauls. Thank you. It's lovely to see you. I miss you, especially when we sing in Christ alone. I'm waiting to hear those symbols coming up.

Where is Jesus? If I asked you personally where is Jesus now? I wonder what you would answer. I wonder if you have an answer indeed.

One of the questions that Jesus asked was "Who you looking for? Who is it you're looking for? Who are you looking for today?". Come to church this morning. I wonder why you came to church this morning. Did you have hopes that I wouldn't be speaking, for instance. We can come to all sorts of reasons we can come because we've always done it. We've done it for years and years.

Wonder if we really look forward to meeting with our brothers and sisters because, that's what we are. We're related to one another in the grace of God. That's why he said to us, love one another as I have loved you. And he has loved us with an everlasting love. A love that is an unconditional he doesn't say come back when you're better people.

He doesn't say to us try harder, be different. He stays by us. And he does through us what he wants to do. It's a great privilege and a wonderful joy but everybody was looking for him. When I say that, think back to when he was born. The Angels came and told the shepherds. There is a saviour born to you this day in the

city of David. And they were looking for him. The wise men were on their way somewhere from we not quite sure from where to come and find Jesus, they were looking for him. And then there was Herod the king, he'd heard about this baby and he was looking for him. He was killing. He wouldn't go away with this baby, this one who was surely trying to take his place. No way.

And then at Easter time, the women came looking for him. Really early in the morning stood dark, just beginning to get light they were looking for him. And Mary Magdalene, this former woman of the street, she came looking for him.

That's where we take it up; in Chapter 20 of John's gospel.

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon, Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said they have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him. Peter and the other disciples started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus head was folded up. And lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who'd reached the tomb first also went in and he saw. And believed for until then, they still hadn't understood the scriptures. That said, Jesus must rise from the dead. Then they went home.

Mary came looking for a dead body. When Jesus had been crucified. Taken down from the cross. They're dead. They had to hurry and put him into the tomb because the next day was a Sabbath and no work could be done. And so it was a hurried effort and they put him into this tomb. The tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea.

She was looking for Jesus. But she was looking for a dead Jesus. That you couldn't find him and it troubled her. Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white robed angels. One sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. Dear woman, why are you crying? The Angel asked her. Because they have taken away, my Lord, she replied. And I don't know where they have put him. She turned to leave and saw someone standing there.

It was Jesus, but she didn't recognise him. Dear woman, why are you crying? Jesus asked her. Who are you looking for? She thought he was the gardener, Sir, she said. If you've taken him away, tell me where you've put him and I will go and get him.

Mary, Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out Raboni, which is Hebrew for teacher. Don't cling to me, Jesus said, for I haven't yet ascended to the father, but go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene found the disciples. And told them I have seen the Lord. Then she gave him his message. They didn't believe it. They thought it was a load of an old wives tale. She thought he was the gardener. Who do you think Jesus is? It's another personal question, which I'd love to ask each one of you. You could tell me, and I'd probably forget it anyway. She was looking for her Lord. She knew who she was looking for, but when she saw him, she didn't know who he was.

I wonder why now? I wonder what the circumstances were that stopped her from recognising Jesus. I personally believe that he had changed in some way that made him. Not easy to identify. But as soon as he speaks her name, Mary, she says raboni teacher.

It's another interesting point. That the disciples and the women and those that loved the Lord didn't refer to him by name, certainly not in the scriptures. They called him teacher. They called him master. They called him Lord. But there's no instance where they to call him Jesus. It's strange.

Who is it? Perhaps they could see in him. That he was not an ordinary man. His birth would be an ordinary very much so. If he is truly the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the one through the whole of creation had taken place. The one who would put the stars in their places. The one who had furnished the earth with creatures of all sorts. Was the king of Kings.

And yet he was born in the stable. Place where cattle were kept. And put in a Manger and we sing all about that at Christmas time.

Do we ever give much thought to that, I wonder?

Who are you looking for? I'll ask again this morning - if we're looking for Jesus are we going to be able to find him? Nobody could find him.

When they were looking at Easter time, the guards there were guards on the tomb where he was buried. They had sealed the tomb. They had put guards there to make sure of what? That the disciples didn't come and steal him and tell people that he'd risen from the dead because Jesus had told them beforehand more than once "I am going to be killed and I'm going to rise again on the third day."

He'd be killed on the Friday and raised on the Sunday.

And they didn't understand what he was talking about. Right up to the time it actually happened.

Interesting. We just read together about John. That's John the one who won't name himself. He says that disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who got there first, running to the tomb. He was the one, got there first. But he didn't go into the tomb and I can just picture Peter coming huffing and puffing along behind him and going straight into the tomb, not waiting to think about it, just doing it. That was Peter.

John was more thoughtful. You like to think things swim, but it says of him he saw and believed. But it's in that belief. That the link between us and Jesus is established. It's called faith.

Faith, do you have faith? Probably got faith in something or someone even, but do you have faith in Jesus? He is the one who in dying reconciled us to God. The difference is we had between us. I don't know where he was by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

It is He who establishes our righteousness. It's a big word righteousness. He makes us right with God. He makes us acceptable to God. And God will welcome us one day to live with him.

Are you ready for that? Are you prepared for that? Do you know what it really means? Do we understand? I wonder the depth of the love that's been shown to us in what Jesus has done in which we are celebrating over this Easter period yet again.

There was Mary crying. Because they've taken a load away. She had Great Expectations, she said. You tell me where you put him, I'll go and get him.

Listen. She'd need a lot of help. If that were the case, and then after Mary, we have the disciples.

Still reading now from Chapter 20 of John.

That Sunday evening, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly Jesus was standing there among them. Peace be with you, he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord again, he said. Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, so I am sending you. Then he breathed on them and said. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

This is the disciples, the people who had lived with him for some three years. Watched and listened to him, loved him, cared about him. Wanted to be with him and now he'd been taken from them. And they couldn't find him. So he found them instead.

So often God takes the initiative in our dealings with him, if we listen. Try to picture that as I've read about it. It must have been amazing. That Jesus suddenly was he was there. Yet the doors were locked. How do you get in? Had he been there all the time? Now there again, there's another aspect that's a mystery to us, really. But he was able to come through locked doors. He was able to disappear.

At will it would seem. There are two people mentioned in Luke's Gospel. They were going on their way to Emmaus where they live. And as they went, Jesus suddenly appeared beside them and talked with them. And walked with him and was invited indoors with him. When they got to Emmaus, it was evening time, the day was wearing on and they said come, come, come in, spend time with us. Stay overnight. Jesus went in with him and as they sat down to eat. He took some bread, he blessed it and broke it and said take, eat this is my body which is broken for you. And then suddenly they realised who he was. Somebody has said they must have seen the nail marks in his hands. Maybe, maybe.

But you know, we're talking about the things of God now God can do all things. No problem. He is a great God. An amazing God. God, it's not very nice, isn't it? But that's what he is. He can do all things. And nobody knew him at the beginning. Here the disciples gathered in this room, together with the doors locked.

They were scared out of their wits. They didn't know they might go the same way that Jesus went. If people realised who they were and what they'd been over the last few years, followers of the Lord Jesus. They looked on him as a rebel, which he was, of course, in that sense. You'd come to establish the Kingdom of God among men. And the doing of it meant overturning not just the money changers tables which he did on more than one occasion it would seem.

But also the habits into which people had fallen. Seem like ourselves, as I said just now, we could come here, we by week or go to some other church week by week, week by week. Well, unless we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are looking to him for salvation. We're largely wasting our time.

But if all the things concerning him that we hear about and read about in God's word are true then we are not wasting our time at all. We are investing that time in the finished work of Jesus. Amazing thing. What grace. God has shown us he's shown us mercy and he's shown us grace. Mercy in as much as we have not received what we deserved.

And grace, because we have received what we don't deserve.

He's a great wonderful God. A truly loving heavenly Father. God give us grace to think about him often.

The world is too much with us, trying to squeeze us into its mood. Tremendous picture that is that the world is trying to squeeze the question. Into its mould so that we think the way that the world thinks. But the Lord has put a new mind in us, a mind that observes what he says. And tries to do what he wants us to do, which is pleasing to him.

So here are these disciples. And it's lovely. First of all, we see them shaking like jellies. They were, they were scared about what was going to happen to them. And then it says afterwards. We read they were filled with joy when they saw the Lord.

And here, on a personal note; have you lost somebody? That you love and care about. I would love to see them again. Yeah.

Wouldn't you show him what? They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Must have been the prayer of their hearts. Despite their fear, but somehow, the Lord would come through. And he did just that.

And what are the first words he says to them? There's a wonderful greeting that was used in those times. Peace. Be unto you – the word Shalom comes. May things be the way they ought to be? May things be the way they ought to be, and that is what Jesus came for. He wants things to be the way they ought to be, the

way that God intended. When God made Adam and Eve, he didn't make them to be disobedient. He made them to have fellowship with.

That's a good word fellowship. I learned it when I first came back to church. And that reminds me, at least today, again, and it was on an Easter day in the year 1958, work it out now, 1958. And I went down into the waters of baptism in the old church, in the High Street. Language we touched in those days. Gospel Hall as it was before that. And it was jolly cold, I can tell you because the way they heated it, they used to have a sort of standing element which was put into the water and to warm it up. But it didn't work that day.

And John Pickett, who was the minister, was smiling away as he often did, because he had robes on that didn't register whether it was warm or cold or what, so it was a bit of a shock, but what a joy. What a joy. What was I doing there? I was just saying, Lord, I belong to you now. I love you. And I know that you have forgiven me my sins. And I know that one day I should be with you forever. And so, never mind about the cold water. Get down there and be baptised.

Eight days later, the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. Peace be with you, he said. And you said to Thomas? Put your finger here and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe.

My Lord. Oh my God, Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him you believe because you've seen me. Blessed to those who believe without seeing me. Thomas had been missing in the first meeting with the disciples. And when they told him we have seen the Lord and they use those words, we have seen the Lord. He said I won't believe. Unless I see the wounds in his hands and put my fingers into them and place my hand into the wound in his side.

That's a terrible act, right? It what would it take to make you believe that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead? Thomas wanted proof.

Can I give you proof? Yes. Look at anyone who professes love for the Lord Jesus. Those who would say I am a Christian. I believe in Christian. Measure proof. Lives changed.

In my own case. No, I don't know. I don't know where I would be today. If he hadn't been for the grace of God in my life. I sometimes ask myself that where would I be if I'd gone the way of some of my pals had gone would be awful. One in particular will remain absolutely anonymous became an alcoholic. And I'm so I used to frequent the pub instead of the church. In fact, when I first started going back to the church, I used to hurry out afterwards and go to the pub. I meet those same pals that I've heard before. But the day came as I say when I. Admissions and I needed my life to be changed. And I knew that Jesus was the one who could do it. I would do it if I asked him. And then I didn't go to the pub anymore. Why is because Christians don't do things like that? Not at all. I just didn't want to. I wanted to go to church. I wanted to have fellowship. I didn't know what fellowship was. I thought it was standing around talking about the weather afterwards. Be human drinking and doing things like that.

Fellowship, the Fellowship in the blood of Jesus is precious.

One of the things that Jesus said was love one another as I have loved you. I've already said this this morning. I say it again and I repeat it as often as you like. Because until we actually do it and we do love one another. The way that Jesus loved us unconditionally. So that we are looking in our brothers and sisters for what we can see with the Lord.

Remember John Perry coming back one time from the meeting and teaching us a new chorus? It's an old chorus now, but I wonder if you know it. I love you with the love of the Lord. Yes, I love you with the love of the Lord. For I see in you. The beauty of my king. I love you with the love of the Lord.

If we can sing that and mean it and do it the world will see, and the world will know. Because Jesus said so. If you have love for one another, this is how all people will know that you are my disciples.

Don't be ashamed of the Lord. Don't be ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God to salvation. It's the only way that we can come. There is only one way. Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. He doesn't say nobody can come to the father. He says no one can come to the father except through me.

Through believing what happened over Easter that's how we come and he is the one who changes our lives, not us. It's the work of God in us by his Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit that he breathed upon his disciples to receive.

Then Chapter 20 of John reads like this.

The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are all written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God. And that by believing in him, you will have life. By the power of his name.

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Pray with me now.

Now, I seem to have said a lot of words. And pray that it may sense to people. The stand the love of God. The longing of God. Who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a saving knowledge of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there's anyone here this morning, Lord. Who has never made any commitment. To you. Pray that even now, as we wait. The spirit of God would open the understanding. And the meaning of these things? To such a one.

Thank you, Lord. For loving us the way you do. You make provision for all our needs, our true needs. We don't know ourselves sometimes what our true needs are.

What did you do? You send your son to die in our place so that he might take the punishment that rightly belongs to us, to set us free. To be yours and yours alone.

Hear these things, we pray, Lord.

We ask you to the name of the same song The Lord Jesus, for his glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen.