

The Meaning of Easter

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[0 : 00] Our reading this morning is on page 1023 of the Church Bibles, it's Mark 15 starting at verse 42. That's on page 1023 of the Church Bibles, Mark 15 starting at verse 42.

It was preparation day, that is the day before the Sabbath. So as evening approached, Joseph of Amrithea, a prominent member of the council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.

So Joseph brought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices so they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

[1 : 14] Very early on, on the first day of the week, just after the sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb, and they asked each other, who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb?

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in white robes, sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

Don't be alarmed, he said. You're looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here.

See the place where they laid him. But go, tell the disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you into Galilee, and there you will see him, just as he told you. Trembling and bewildered, the woman went out and fled from the tomb.

They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. Thank you. Great, well thanks Simon.

[2 : 15] And we're going to have a little quiz now, all together. And if you're in primary or seekers, you might want a better view. So come down to the front, and I've got a very special helper today.

Michael Reader Harris is going to help me. So we're just going to get some chairs. You definitely don't want to miss this. Michael, I'm going to give you a special hot seat there.

Lots to see, everybody. And we're going to have a microphone for Michael.

Oh yeah, lots of helpers. And we're going to play a game called, a quiz called Believe It or Not.

Believe It or Not is the game. Now, we've got lots of visitors at St. Silas this morning, which is really fun. You're very welcome. Some of our friends have gone.

[3 : 14] There's tears already. Who knows what's going to happen. We're just going to keep going. Some of our friends have gone to visit their family. So they're away this week, which is also brilliant. Here's the big question.

If we told them what happened next week when they come back, we told them what had happened at church this morning, would they believe it or not?

Okay, Michael? That's the game. Okay. So we're going to hear about some things. Welcome, Michael, to the quiz. Michael's here because he deals in facts very well.

And so, Michael, this is for you. Okay. You're going to need that. And I'm going to give Michael a series of statements about what happens at church today. And you can all help.

You need to help Michael decide if that is believable or not believable when we report it to our friends who come back to church next week. Okay? Everybody understand the game?

[4 : 11] Everybody can see the thing? Michael, are you happy? All right. Here we go. Michael, here's to your first.

Shall I hold that card for you? I'll hold that. Right. There you go. Read that out. Let's see what we think. First one is, Believe it or not, Greg played the guitar.

Ooh. What do you think? Believe it or not, Greg played the guitar. You can give us a thumbs up if Michael needs help deciding. He's not sure. Would people believe that Greg played the guitar? I'm getting a lot. Yeah? Yeah? What do you think, Michael? Is that a believe it or not? I think it's a believe it on the basis of all those children.

Thanks. Yeah? Number one, believe. Brilliant. Okay. Round of applause. Really great. Thank you. Good thinking. Okay. Here we go. Here we go. You're going to have to think about this. That's number two.

[5 : 09] Believe it or not, a parrot flew into church and sat on the piano. Do you believe that? Now, believe it or should I take that back for you? Believe it or not, a parrot flew into church and sat on the piano.

If we told our friends next week that happened, do you think they would believe it? Do you not think that they might have flown in through the back? There's big doors. Is there a zoo in Glasgow? I don't know.

Let's have some shouts. Do you think yes or no? One, two, three. No. No. Michael, what do you think? I think on the basis of the children, I need to go for...

Not. Not. People wouldn't believe that, would they? No. Okay, here we go. We're doing very well. Two out of two. Let's see how we go with this one. How many more are there?

Not many. Don't worry. Believe it or not, after church, the grown-ups drank coffee and chatted. Believe it or not, let's have that again.

[6 : 12] After church, the grown-ups drank coffee and chatted. Grown-ups never chatted, do they? For a long time. Do grown-ups chat after church?

Michael, how are you feeling about this one? Having a think? Should we get some cheers? They all seem to be... One, two, three. Yes or no. Ready? One, two, three. Yeah.

That was awfully quiet. Not like the grown-ups chatting. One, two, three. Yeah. Yeah. That's pretty believable, isn't it? Okay. Okay. Okay. Right.

Let's see what would happen if we told our friends this next week. Believe it or not, a helicopter landed on the church roof during Martin's talk.

Got some laughs. Believe it or not, a helicopter landed on the roof, on the church roof, during Martin's talk. Can we broaden that? It could possibly be on the church hall roof because the church roof's quite difficult to land on.

[7 : 16] Okay. Okay. Negotiating. It's broadening a bit. Interesting. Interesting. Is that... I mean, it's... You know, maybe there's an incident that happens outside church. What do you think?

Would people believe? Emily's going no. Matty's going no. Rachel... Michael, do you want help? Should we have some cheers? Cheers, I think. I'm not quite sure yet. One, two, three. Do you think yes or no? One, two, three. No, it's...

Okay, well... There's one yes over there. There's one yes. Otherwise, I think everyone else was a... No one would believe that, would they? No one would believe that. Okay. Well, here we go. Last one.

Number five. Believe it or not, Amy Wicks cut my tie in half. What? What? You wouldn't...

No. You wouldn't believe that, would you? Believe it or not, Amy Wicks cut my tie in half. I mean, she works for the church. No. I'm nice. I would never do that, would I?

[8 : 11] Do you think I would do that? Do you think people would believe that I cut Michael's tie in half? Yes. I'm getting a lot of no's. Okay. One, two, three. Yes!

Well, I don't know. I don't know. I mean, you're saying no. I suppose the question... Go on, Michael. Mainly no's, wasn't it? Mainly no's. What would it take for everybody next week to believe that I cut Michael's tie in half?

Marks and Spencer's silk. Would people believe... Would people believe now... If I...

Fabric, scissors, it's fine, everyone. Would people believe... If I cut... Wow! I mean, the thing is now, there's like 200 eyewitnesses to this event.

Michael, would people believe that I cut your tie in half? They would now. They would now. Very good. Should we have a round of applause for Michael for coming up? Very good.

[9 : 18] And I think... I'm a very upset child. I think it's probably a good idea now to go back to our seats and Michael is going to...

Don't worry, it was from a charity shop. It's okay. And Martin is going to come up and help us think about something believable or unbelievable. Thank you, Michael.

Okay. I'll take that. I'll go rescue my grand. I'll take... Brilliant.

Brilliant. Okay. We'll talk about that in the feedback. So, well done. Thank you, Michael. Thank you, Amy. People are heading back.

It was very dramatic. But it's amazing, isn't it? That something could be so surprising and so unexpected that people wouldn't believe it.

[10:21] But then, if lots of people tell them, no, it really did happen, we saw it, then maybe they could believe it. And Mark, Mark, the first century disciple who wrote Mark's Gospel, he wants us to be sure that something astonishing happened on that first Easter Sunday morning.

So he tells us not just about what happened, but about the key people who saw it. So that even though it's unexpected, we can trust that it's true. He tells us about the women.

They saw Jesus die, Mary Magdalene, Mary, Jesus' mother, and Salome. And he says that many other women were there as well and they saw Jesus die on the cross.

He wants us to be, to know that we can be sure Jesus was dead on the cross. And he tells us about Joseph of Arimathea. He was a respected counselor.

Lots of people knew him. And he went to see the governor, Pilate, to say, could I have the body? Because he wanted to honor Jesus by putting the body in his tomb. And Pilate was unsure.

[11:27] Was Jesus already dead? So he went and got his centurion, the soldier in charge of a hundred soldiers who knew all about killing people. And he asked him to check, is Jesus dead?

And the centurion said, he's definitely dead. So the body was taken down. And Joseph of Arimathea, listen to how up close and personal he gets to the body.

It says, so Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in the tomb cut out of rock.

And then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. The next thing we need to know from eyewitnesses is that the tomb was found empty. So in verse 47, Mark tells us that Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, of Joseph, saw where he was laid.

So they see which tomb it is. And when it wasn't the Sabbath, on the Saturday night after sunset, when they could go and buy things, they went and bought spices to anoint Jesus' body.

[12:28] And then on the Sunday morning, they've just got one question on their way to the tomb. Their question is, who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb?

But they get there and the very large stone that had been there on the Friday night and on the Saturday has been rolled away. And they go into the tomb and they see an angel.

The body isn't there. The tomb is empty of a body and there's a man dressed in white and he's on the right side. And they're afraid because the tomb is empty of a body.

And we know from other accounts that Jesus was then seen alive again by Mary and then by 10 of the first 12 and then a week later by Thomas and then by over 500 people at the same time.

So that as they went to say, no, he is alive, we saw him, other people could believe that astonishing news. That's what happened. A bit like the unexpected thing we had this morning with Michael's tie.

[13:29] You can believe it when people saw it and they tell us the news. But what does it mean? Well, we hear what it means from the angel who the women meet in the tomb.

And we're going to think about being afraid. So here's a question. What makes you afraid? What are you scared of? What sort of things make you afraid, make you scared?

Anyone got any thoughts about things we find scary? Don't all come at once.

Any ideas of things we find scary? Yeah. Lillian? Yeah.

Wanting your family to know about Jesus. That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Rachel? The dark. The dark. I think I've got a picture of that. We've got that, Chris? Some people in our family are afraid of the dark.

[14:27] What other things might scare us? Yeah. Snakes and scorpions. Thank you, Norma. Yeah. Other things that we find scary? A big bear.

Yeah. Emily over there? Geese. Was it geese? What did we get here? I missed that. Sharks.

Absolutely. This is great. There's lots of scary creatures, isn't there? Greg's scared of a big bear.

Over there, we've got sharks. We've got geese. I had some pictures of, I think, spiders. Some of us find spiders scary, don't we?

Spiders. Some people treat them as spiders. Other people are afraid of flying, of getting on a plane. Some people are scared of getting their jag. Okay. There's things that we're afraid of, aren't there? Some people are afraid of mice and rats. I lived in a house once where there were mice and me and my two flatmates, we used to set traps and it was, we had a game and we'd hear the traps go off in the night and in the morning we'd go and find out whose traps got the mice.

[15:37] Sorry, maybe that's not great to share right now. Anyway, okay, so some things make us scared and we can keep away from them. We can keep away from airplanes or from sharks or from bears but other things we can be afraid of and we can't keep away from them.

I've got some thoughts about things that might make us afraid. One is about losing loved ones. Sometimes we're afraid that people will die. Another thing that we can be afraid of is being lonely. Maybe especially if we're a bit older, we can be afraid of being lonely. And sometimes we can be afraid when we don't know what's going to happen. So we found that scary with the virus, didn't we? When things kept changing and sometimes the schools closed and we'd suddenly find out the schools are going to be closed and sometimes we'd find out that we'd all have to stay at home for longer than we thought and we found it scary not knowing what's going to happen and some people are scared today about we don't know what's going to happen.

We're scared about Ukraine. We're scared about Russia. And the threats that are made. We're scared about the fuel prices and rising prices. So we get afraid when we don't know what's going to happen.

[16:52] And can I say, if you're a guest this morning, it's great that you're here. And I'd love you to think more about this because I think sometimes we can think about Easter and Jesus and God and the Bible and maybe think, I don't know what it's got to do with my life.

It's hard to think, what really has this got to do with me? But actually, we go through our lives worried about this kind of thing. We have worries. We get anxious about these things.

And I want us to think about the difference it makes what the angel said to the women. So here's the big hope of Easter. Easter means, we heard it from the angel to the women.

It means, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Our first point is, don't be afraid. He has risen. The angel says, you're looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified.

He has risen. He's not here. See the place where they laid him. And this is news that changes everything because Jesus explained to us that all of us are broken from the people we should be.

[17:55] We've all sinned. We've all said to God in our lives, get out in our hearts. We've all turned from God and we've been cut off from God. We've not treated him as we should.

And Jesus said he'd come on a rescue mission into the world to serve and to give his life as a ransom to pay for that sin. How do we know it worked? Well, he has risen.

And it shows us that God was saying the debt is paid. The ransom price has been paid. Your sins are forgiven if you trust in him. His mission is accomplished.

And he has risen which means that we can rise as well. You see, Jesus is the first person who ever lived who's died and got new resurrection life.

Other people died around Jesus and he raised them but what he did was they died and he brought them back to life to live and die again. Jesus is the first man ever to go through death and out the other side to live, never to die again.

[18:57] And that means that if we trust him, we will live with him forever as well. It's the most wonderful news. Hope beyond the grave. A few years ago, Pepsi ran an advert campaign.

Their advert campaign said, come alive, you're in the Pepsi generation. And that's, people bought Pepsi all over the world saying, yeah, I'm part of the Pepsi generation.

Except Scotland, Iron Brew. But come alive, you're in the Pepsi generation. But they found that the adverts were not working in China. People were not buying Pepsi in China.

Why were they not buying it? Why did they not like the advert? And then they found out that they mistranslated it. And instead of saying, come alive, it said, in China, Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead.

And of course, people knew that that was not true. Pepsi can't do that. Even Iron Brew cannot do that. But the angel says, he's risen.

[20:02] And that means that Jesus can bring us back from the dead. He brings us through death and out the other side. And if we know a loved one who trusts Jesus and they die, that we'll be with them.

If we keep trusting Jesus, that he'll take us to be with him and with them forever. He has risen. What wonderful news. And we need to hear that this year when it's been such a hard year, hasn't it? When there's been such sadness about people dying with the virus, people dying in conflict and fighting. It's so difficult. Those words, he has risen, mean we don't need to be afraid of death anymore.

How wonderful. That's our first point. Don't be afraid. He has risen. Secondly, don't be afraid. He's going ahead of you. He's going ahead of you.

The angel says, but go, tell his disciples and Peter, he's going ahead of you into Galilee. Now when the angel says that, it's packed with exciting meaning.

[21 : 04] In Mark chapter 1, Jesus exploded into his mission in Galilee. And now he's saying to people, go back, even Peter, go to Galilee.

He's going there. And he's going to send them out on a mission like his mission. It's a bit like sometimes you have a favorite music band and then they split up.

Maybe one of the band want to go and do their own thing. It happened to Take That. It happened to the Spice Girls. It happened to Abba, Genesis, Pink Floyd.

And then you find out what happened to the band members and some of them have done well, but others got lonely and they've struggled and they wish the band was back together. Abba, and then they have a reunion.

Abba had a reunion last year. Catherine Campbell was so pleased on the staff team. And the fans come together in celebration. They have concerts and you see the members happy to be there again.

[22 : 03] Well, with Jesus, his followers were scattered and they were alone and maybe they thought, God will never want to be with me again. Maybe Peter thought that. He denied Jesus. And Jesus sends the message, he's going to meet them and he's going to bring the band back together again.

And he's going to send them on a mission like his mission. His mission was a mission to share the news, to preach that the time has come. The King is here in Jesus. Turn back to God and believe the good news that you can be part of his kingdom.

And it's news that some people reject, but you can accept. And if you accept it, he makes you clean before God. He washes your sins away. He's come to be the sin doctor and his kingdom will be like a mustard seed that becomes a great tree.

And he's going to send people out on that mission. And we, today, are part of that band as well. We're part of God's people, his family, Jesus' church, because he draws us together, not to be afraid, but to drive forward in our lives, knowing him and making him known.

And I don't know about you, but I think this is one of my favorite things about Easter is sharing Easter with the church family. It's being together today and gathering and seeing each other.

[23 : 22] So that's our second point. Don't be afraid. He is going ahead of you. That is that we don't need to be afraid of being alone because he's bringing us together to be with him.

And our third reason not to be afraid is don't be afraid. Jesus' words are true. So the angel says to the women, he's gone ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.

He told the disciples in Mark chapter 8 and Mark chapter 9, he's going to die. He's going to rise. In Mark chapter 10, he says, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. Three days later, he will rise.

So Jesus has risen. We're forgiven by his death. We have hope to live forever like his life. But also, it means his words come true. And that's such good news because we live in a world where we get worried because we don't know what the future will hold.

[24 : 28] We don't know what's going to happen. But Jesus didn't just say he would rise again. He said some really important words about our lives and about the future. He said if you trust him that you're in his family now.

If you trust him, you have his spirit with you in your life. If you trust him, God the Father is working in all things for your good to make you more like Jesus until Jesus returns.

And if you trust him, Jesus will come back and he'll take you to be with him in his world put right forever. These are things that are going to happen and we can have confidence that his words are

true because he's risen.

So Easter means don't be afraid. We're afraid of death but the angel says he has risen. Death has been defeated. It's like sleep. It's lost its sting and we'll wake up from it to live forever with him.

We're afraid of being lonely but the angel says go and tell the disciples and even Peter he's gone ahead of you and there you'll see him. The band's getting back together. We're afraid of the future but the angel says there you'll see him just as he told you.

[25 : 37] Jesus has told us everything we need to know so that we can trust his words and not be afraid of the future. So let's pray and thank God for Easter.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we praise you and thank you for the angel's words. Words that say to us don't be afraid.

would your spirit help us in our hearts and minds to trust Jesus' words more deeply that we wouldn't be afraid because we have great confidence that our sins are forgiven that death is not the end that we are part of his family with a church that is here and all over the world and his words are trustworthy and true.

We ask for our good and for your glory. Amen.