

Go! Tell the world: 'Christ is risen'!

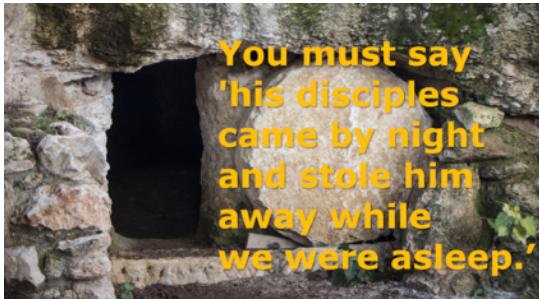
Matthew 28:1-10

What do you love most about Easter? For some people, it's getting together with family and friends, perhaps for a special Easter Day lunch. Others like the special worship services, like the one we held here on Good Friday, or the dawn service this morning. For some (especially kids), it's the Easter eggs and hot cross buns, or relaxing through the long weekend, or going away camping or caravanning.



Do you know what I love the most? It's that wonderful time when Christians worship together in one space and proclaim the good news, "Christ is risen!" And the echo in the congregation as we worship, "He is risen indeed!" I love this greeting today and throughout the whole Easter season.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! And we proclaim this not only in the Easter season but throughout the year in so many ways in the Church. I think especially of the readings and prayers at a funeral service. It's perhaps there in the place of grief and hardship that the sureness of Christ risen from the dead... risen indeed, and with this the sure promise and gift that all who die in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



But not everyone knows this. I find it important to note that what follows in Matthew 28 is an attempt by the chief priests to cover up the fact and the news of the resurrection of Jesus. Listen in to Matthew 28:11-13:

Some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

That was back then. But it remains Satan's goal — although Satan is totally defeated — it remains Satan's death-spiral goal to stop the news of Jesus' resurrection to life for all people, getting out to all people.

Today we know that not everyone we know, knows of the resurrection and the life for them. More than half the people of this nation either don't know or don't believe in Jesus. Many people don't believe that Jesus was a real person who lived in human history. On June 10 last year, *Eternity News* reported that only half of all Australians understand Jesus to be a real person who lived at a time and place in history, according to an Australian Community Survey released by the National Church Life Survey Research team. Does this make you sit up and take some more notice? Consider your relationships with others today when the survey said that two in 10 Australians said Jesus was a mythical or fictional character, while three in 10 didn't know. This runs in the face of

ancient historians and scholars of the New Testament who universally accept that Jesus was a real person.

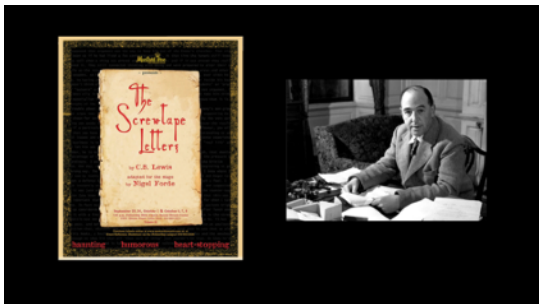
How times change!

Some years ago, I remember reading that someone intentionally misquoted Matthew's account of the resurrection: in Matthew 28, quoting the angel speaking to the women at the tomb, "I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified...he is not here." And that's where they left it... trying to make the case for God not being here... for not being part of life... for not being resurrected at all. Time magazine ran with a front cover "Is God dead?" in a controversial edition dated 8 April 1966.



So what do we make of this as Easter good news comes to us again today? The Easter angels at the tomb say to the two women who arrive, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen!!! [He is risen indeed!] just as he said.

So, let me give you another and what I consider the right perspective. C.S. Lewis, who lived in the first half of the twentieth century and who wrote such wonderful accounts of faith life such as the *Screwtape Letters*, which chronicles a story of a devil trying to tempt a human away from faith and to go on the path away from the truth, once wrote of the resurrection that "one must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement (or story) which, if false, is of no importance, but if true is of infinite importance [and I would add especially now in the first half of the 21st Century]. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." The one thing Jesus cannot be is moderately important. We can't be luke warm or cold.



At this time in the life, in the history of the world, there has never been a more important time for you and I to celebrate Easter and what it means for us and our lives. And what does this mean? I suggest at least two things of utmost importance:

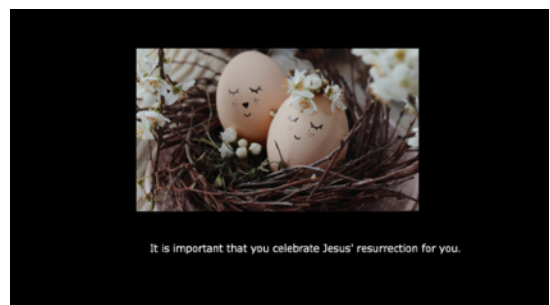
1. To hear the news for you, for us, of the resurrection with the first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus, the women who went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away.

The angel comes to us where we are this Easter day and says

"Don't be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he is risen [he is risen indeed!] ... go quickly and tell the disciples... for he has been raised and has gone ahead of you to Galilee and there you shall see him."

Don't be afraid... he is risen. He is risen for you.

And then Jesus comes and appears to them and says:



2. To go and tell... not half heartedly, but to *run* with the good news that Jesus is risen. It's that urgent. (Contact someone in your life today and share this.)

So hear the news again for you. Consider the two eggs I introduced before with the children.

The eggs can symbolise that Jesus calls you and me to go and to tell that he has life for us, and for all people too. To share the reason for the hope we have. C.S. Lewis was right. We can't do this resurrected life, this life of faith thing, half-heartedly.

This applies to my personal witness in life, and this applies to our community witness, and especially as we make a presence of grace known here at Riversdale Road and beyond through mission proclamation.



Dear friends in Christ, if the Christian story of resurrection is true — and I hold it with all my being and with all my trust and faith in God and his promises — then it is of infinite importance, and we have life to give to a world living in fear and uncertainty. Perfect love drives out fear, and perfect life is God's eternal gift for all who trust in Christ. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address: <https://www.youtu.be/ccZyk3RAIMg>