

“They Didn’t Get It! Do You?”

Luke 24:1-12

Everton Hills

27 March 2016

He is Risen! He is risen, indeed!

I love Easter. It is the highlight of my year. Not because of the chocolate... I’m a bit over that – although I do love a good fruity Hot Cross Buns.

I love Easter because it contains the promise that out of pain and distress and agony and fear and worry and hurt and whatever else it might be that we face in our lives – comes hope and life and a future! And that happens because of what Christ did on the inside of the tomb!

“Great things always begin from the inside. If an egg is broken by an outside force, life ends. If broken from inside force, life begins!”

That’s why Easter is a season of joy. Christians around the world, today, are singing songs like, “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” and “My Redeemer Lives”. We sing those songs, not because of a grave cut into a limestone cave, but because this Jesus, who was crucified, who was placed in a grave in limestone cave, which was secured by professional Roman soldiers, showed himself alive, **with a resurrected, glorified body.**

It’s hard to believe, isn’t it!

Think about it.

The story begins almost 2,000 years ago on a Friday, the day Jesus of Nazareth was **nailed to a cross and died.** His followers were broken. They hid because of fear of repercussion. They had seen him beaten. They had watched his body whipped with a weapon that would literally rip the skin off his back. They had heard the agony of his cries as he was nailed, blow by blow to a cross. They had heard him cry out “Eli Eli Lema Sabachthani... My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.”

In those words, I imagine, they must have thought that even God had let him down.

Then they saw the agony of his death, his total despair and desolation. “It is finished”.

And to top it off, they watched those professional killers thrust a spear through his side, so that there was proof that he died. The bible says that

“But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn’t break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out.” (John 19:33–34, NLT)

And with the outflowing of that and water, with those words ‘It is Finished’ ringing in their ears, they must have thought that their story ends. Along with Jesus death, died the hopes and dreams of these followers.

Out of respect, a guy called Joseph of Arimathea, was allowed to bury Jesus. The bible says that Joseph used some 30kg of perfumed ointment containing myrrh and aloes to at least arrest the stench of death. It was late in the day and the following day was the Sabbath.

So Jesus was placed in a new grave, hewn out of rock, and at the request of the religious leaders, those who had plotted and planned for this moment, Pilate, the Roman Governor, had a seal placed upon the great stone which blocked the entrance to the tomb; and a guard to make sure that this 'myth' was extinguished.

If you had been there, with all that you had seen and smelled and heard, your hopes, your dreams, too, would have been snuffed out like the wick of a candle squeezed between two fingers.

That's the way it is, isn't it. So often in our lives, hopes perish, dreams die.

It was a day later, when the women approached the tomb to pay their final respects, to shed their final tears, to finish the proper burial procedure.

They did not expect what was about to happen.

Note that it was the women who went. Not the men. Not those who seemed to be closest to Jesus. It was the women who plucked up enough courage to honour their Lord. The men were hiding! Typical!

"... very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 24:1-3, NLT)

"Maybe", the women thought, "somebody has stolen the corpse. Maybe somebody has moved the body."

I think that they probably thought a lot of things. One thing that they did not think was that maybe Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. They didn't get it.

You can hardly blame them. Death is final. That's your experience. And it's mine!

But I love what happens next.

"As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes." (Luke 24:4, NLT)

The women heard the words of the angel and believed. And in their excitement, they run to the eleven disciples...

"But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn't believe it." (Luke 24:11, NLT)

Us blokes, have a lot to answer for when it comes to valuing the word of the women.

But one (or two) believed... something. Peter seemed to believe the women that at least the body was gone...

“However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.” (Luke 24:12, NLT)

We know from the Gospel of John that John was also with Peter. He went inside the tomb and saw the linen, the one that had been wrapped around Jesus on the afternoon that he was buried.

But there was no body inside the linen...

“Then the disciple who had 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.” (John 20:8–9, NLT)

Eventually, they get it. Even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen, immediately when it did, they still didn’t get it. It was only after the fact, after they saw the empty linen shroud, that it started to make sense... Somehow, the body of Jesus passed through the linen shroud and it fell back on the stone shelf. John and Peter, sort of got it!

Note, that they still didn’t fully ‘get it’. But this was to be the start of a journey that would lead to a deeper understand of the significance of the risen Lord. Standing in the empty tomb, looking at the collapsed linen, Peter and John knew for certain **that Jesus Christ, the Son of God was alive.**

Two thousand years on, and the question we need to consider every Easter is this... “do you get it?”

Do you understand the significance of the empty tomb?

Do you understand how the empty tomb is like a bold shout of hope to you and me when life just gets you down?

Do you understand that as you get closer to the end of your life, that here is God’s promise to you, that the end is not necessarily the end, but rather the beginning?

When we declare, “He is risen, he is risen indeed”, do you get how that can impact your life, at the highest of your highs and the lowest of your lows!

You see, that is why I love Easter. Because the resurrection is for me, God’s amazing proof that he loves me, even when all seems lost; indeed, that especially during those times that he is holding on to me.

May this Easter be a profound promise to you to continue to give you hope when all else seems lost.