

EASTER SUNDAY - Risen Indeed

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 31st of March 2002. The preacher is Paul Dudley.

His sermon is entitled, Risen Indeed, and is based on Luke 24, verses 13-35.

Father, we do indeed thank you that you have sent your Son Jesus into this world, that he is worthy of power and glory and honour and praise.

Father, we do pray that you help us now to have our eyes that are open, that we may see the great truths that are in your Word. We pray this in your Son's name. Amen.

Amen. For those who know me, I have two very cute and adorable children.

[0 : 5 7] One is three and the other is a one-year-old. The three-year-old, Olivia, is a child that is full of energy. My mother is really pleased about this.

She said that what goes around comes around. She loves climbing. She has a fantastic imagination.

She has some imaginary friends. There's Mina and Hubie and all these other characters that she just makes up names for. She is a person who loves cutting up paper.

She only has to find a pair of scissors and a bit of paper and she'll cut it up. In fact, I had an important piece of paper once that was sitting on my desk. It was fair game.

And so I spent the afternoon trying to put the pieces together of this bit of paper to try and work out what it actually had said. My other daughter, Georgina, a one-year-old.

[2 : 0 0] We're only just starting to get to know her and her personality. We're starting to work out that she is a very determined little girl. She knows exactly what she wants and when she wants it.

And she'll let you know in no uncertain terms all about it. She's a person who's not necessarily a great sleeper. She's a person who loves her little swing though.

Loves going on the swing. And she has this relationship with animals, dogs and cats. Where she is, at the same point, excited and thrilled to see them get utterly terrified.

It's this... But we didn't always know Georgina the way that we do in Noah.

We look forward to getting to know her as she grows up and what she'll be like. My wife reflected on this in her journal when Georgina was born. And she looked down at this little baby and wondered, what would she be like?

[3 : 0 6] What would she grow up to be? And she reflected in her journal the great fear that she had was that Georgina would die. And she would never know what she would be like if she grew up.

My wife felt the reality of death in those early couple of weeks and months. She recognised that Georgina's life was very fragile.

It could be taken at any moment. In fact, we had two friends, two close friends. His children died at birth and it grieved us greatly. Those of you who have come up against death have felt its sting.

Know this pain. This reality of death. That of hurts. Why? Why die? Why death?

Jesus' disciples knew these emotions as well. The disciples of Jesus. Their great friend. Their great king.

[4 : 15] Their great teacher. They knew Jesus. They saw the great things he had done. They'd spent so much time. They'd left everything for him. And followed him.

And yet, there he died on a cross. A terrible death. They felt that pain of death. The sting of death. And they are left confused.

They're left. Asked him the question. Why? Why should Jesus die? Well, in the morning, three days later, we saw in the kids' talk that the women go to the tomb.

And they find out that Jesus is alive. They go back and tell the disciples. And yet, they still don't believe. They are so blinded by grief and their own understanding.

They cannot understand why Jesus should die. They don't believe that he is alive. In chapter 24, verse 11, they say this.

[5 : 17] But these words seem to them as an idle tale. They did not believe them. We saw how Peter rushes to the tomb. And his response?

Then he went home, amazed what had happened. Why had Jesus died? What had happened to this body? They are left confused.

What's going on? Our story that we pick up in the Bible reading today, that I'm going to be looking at, is one of the most vivid accounts of the appearance of Jesus.

A very vivid account. It's a story full of irony and reversals. It's about two disciples. These aren't one of the twelve, the twelve apostles.

These are two followers of Jesus who have been following along with Jesus. In utter despair, they leave Jerusalem and head to Emmaus. We pick this up in verse 13.

[6 : 20] Now, on the same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them.

But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. They're walking along, discussing the great things that had happened, trying to work it all out. What had happened to Jesus?

Was he alive? Where was the body? Jesus comes walking up the sidewalk. Jesus gets so blinded, so blinded by their grief and by their own misunderstandings, they don't even recognize that Jesus is standing there.

They don't see him. They don't understand that he's there. And Jesus starts walking along with them. He says to them, what are you discussing with each other while you were walking along?

They stood still, looking sad. They're stunned. They can't believe it. You haven't heard? Jesus, they can't believe it.

[7 : 31] They're just standing there, absolutely stunned. Great sadness and gloom. Cleopas, which is one of the disciples who was on the road, answered him, are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place in these days?

Have you had your head in the sand? Don't you know what's happened? The public trial, the crucifixion of Jesus, him hanging on a tree three days ago.

You haven't heard of these things? They're utterly amazed. Utterly amazed. Jesus responds.

What things? What things happened? And then, the disciples launch into this description of what has happened. Can you see the irony here?

They're describing what took place. They just start describing who Jesus was. And there he is in their midst. And they can't even see. They start by saying, the things of Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

[8 : 54] Jesus, you haven't heard of Jesus? The one of great deeds? The great prophet? Greater than Moses? You haven't heard of him? He was mighty in word and deed.

But our chief priests, our leaders, they handed him over and he died. They condemned him to death and crucified him.

Notice the language here that the disciples used to describe what happened with Jesus. It is the language that Jesus has used on three occasions through the book of Luke.

That he would in fact die, that he would be condemned to death and be crucified. This is the language that Jesus had predicted. And they're quoting it back at Jesus, yet they still don't understand.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things took place. Jesus was the one to redeem himself.

[9 : 56] They're blinded by what they expected would happen. Jesus was their great hope. The one who was going to bring about redemption for Israel. Bring about this new era.

This era where death would be conquered. This era where there would be no political injustice.

Where they would be released from the Roman occupation. They would be delivered as a nation. They expected these things to happen. They expected Jesus to come to be the great ruler. The great judge.

That he would stand there and fix things the way that they should be. That they'd been promised. But he was dead. They just couldn't put the two things together. Moreover, some of the women of our group astounded us.

They went at the tomb. They were at the tomb early this morning. And when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us, or they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

[11 : 01] They quote back at Jesus what had happened earlier that morning. That the angels had said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said.

But they did not see him. Can you pick up the hint here what they wanted? They wanted to see Jesus. If we can just see it, we'll believe it. If Jesus, if we can see him alive, then all things, we'll believe it, it'll be fine.

Jesus is in their midst. Why doesn't Jesus at this moment just go, here I am. Hello. You're talking to him. I'm alive. But no, Jesus doesn't do that.

Jesus has a greater purpose. He could have revealed himself to all the apostles straight away. But it was more important that they understood what had happened. Jesus wanted to explain why the Messiah had to suffer.

We see in verse 25, Jesus' response to what the disciples have just said. The disciples are blind.

[12 : 10] We've seen this blindness. It's, um, I don't know if you've ever seen those 3D pictures where you blur your eyes a little bit and you've got to try and see the picture and all of a sudden it comes to life, this picture, and you see a 3D image in it.

I don't know if you've ever seen those pictures, but I went to a, um, a shop that just had every wall full of these 3D pictures. And I'd be walking around trying to cross my eyes and blur them, trying to work out the picture.

And it'd be all there somewhere, but I just couldn't see it. It'd be blurring. And little kids would be running around going, oh, look at the dinosaur. Look at the plane.

And I'd be going, no. I just can't see it. The people would come around and try and help you to see the picture.

Well, here Jesus starts to help them to see the picture. Because they've got all the pieces there, but they don't understand it. So Jesus says, in verse 25, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have declared.

[13 : 21] Now, I looked up my grief notes. We did grief in our first year of Bible college. How to deal with grief. And I noticed that this is not one of the things that you should say to a person who is suffering greatly.

How foolish you are. Jesus, in his wisdom, starts to lift the veil from their eyes.

He points out that it was necessary that the Messiah should die. The prophets spoke about it. The Old Testament, the thing that you should know, spoke about the fact that the Messiah should die and be raised.

Jesus spoke about it himself three times, as we've noted before. Yet, they still do not understand. They did not understand why Jesus had to die.

Jesus here starts to explain why it is important to understand what Easter is all about. Just to see the risen Lord, if you want to see him, if you want to see the risen Lord, you want to see him, then you need to understand what Easter is about.

[14 : 38] That's why Jesus prolongs revealing himself to them. He wants them to understand what Easter is all about. Why the Messiah had to suffer.

We see there in the next verse, in 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. Jesus starts working through the Old Testament and starts showing them how these things were to be fulfilled.

That he, in fact, was part of God's plan. That suffering was a part of it. Before Jesus could be going to glory, before he could stand there as the great judge, before he could fix things, restore the world the way it should be, it was necessary that he should suffer and die.

And he starts explaining it. It would have been a great sermon to be there. In this church, we have a library of tapes from all the different sermons. It would have been great to have this on tape.

Jesus explaining the Old Testament, showing how it pointed to him. What a great sermon that would have been. We could have made a fortune trying to sell this to people.

[15 : 56] Jesus pointed out the importance of understanding. And you could see through all this, the veil being lifted from the eyes. You could see them starting to see the pictures, starting to see them come together.

Well, Jesus decides that he should keep on going. As they came to the village, Jesus motioned to say he was going to go on.

And they said, no, hang on, hang on, come back, Jesus. Don't go on. Stay with us. Well, they didn't actually know it was Jesus at that point. They said, don't go on. Stay with us. So, we see there that he stayed with them.

In verse 30, when he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. Something that Jesus had done on a number of occasions.

The two occasions in mind are certainly that when Jesus was with the 5,000, feeding the 5,000. It's a similar language. Taking the bread, blessing it, and breaking it.

[17 : 06] It's a similar language to that of Jesus in the Last Supper. Jesus taking the bread, breaking it, and giving it. Now, a very similar language.

It's at this moment that the disciples see Jesus. They come to understand who is this man that has been with them. It's Jesus, the risen Lord.

He's alive. Now, we're not sure whether it's because he held up his arms and they saw the nail, the holes in the wrists, or what it was. But the Bible tells us that their eyes were open and they understood that Jesus was with them.

What a place to be revealed. At a meal, a place of fellowship. A meal, which looks forward almost to that great banquet in heaven which we'll enjoy with Jesus and God.

Well, what is their response? Because Jesus has been revealed, all of a sudden he vanishes. His job is done. They've come to understand what Easter is about.

[18 : 16] Well, we see there at verse 33, the same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, the Lord has risen indeed. He has appeared to Simon. And they told what had happened on the road and how it had been known to them in the breaking of the bread.

They get up. They hightail it, straight back to Jerusalem. They're anxious to tell people about this. Jesus is alive. And more than that, they're starting to understand why he had to die.

And they get back there and before they can utter a word, the other disciples say, he's risen indeed. He's appeared to Simon. This is great news. Then the two describe how they saw Jesus on the road and how he explained all the things to them and made it known to them.

And then in the breaking of bread that Jesus revealed himself. They were excited by this. Risen indeed.

[19 : 23] The disciples came to understand that at the cross Jesus took the punishment for them. We saw that on Good Friday. Here was the point that all the scripture looked forward to.

When God would deal with sin, when God rather than laying the punishment on us for our rejection of God lays it on Christ, on Jesus.

The Messiah must suffer. They were beginning to understand this. They were beginning to understand that he did indeed have to suffer for them. but not only that, he was alive.

The sting of death had been taken away. Christ had won the victory. Life had been given. In Christ, those who trusted in him, life was theirs.

The disciples understood this. It was starting to become clear for them and they were excited about that. Not all have this same response as the disciples.

[20 : 33] Not all understood what Easter is all about. Alan Jones is a radio announcer in Sydney. You may have heard of him. He used to be the Wallabies captain and also used to coach the Tigers league team in Sydney.

At Easter, he gives an Easter message and it's often quite good. But this year, he spoke about Easter as being a very powerful symbol.

A powerful symbol. That each of us must bear our crosses. That each of us have been crucified in some way. That each of us have been insulted.

We need to take up our crosses and bear them. For Alan Jones, Easter is just a powerful symbol. Just a powerful symbol.

World War I, for a lot of people, is just a symbol as well. A symbol of victory. A symbol of the Anzac spirit. For those who are part of World War I, those who are there or have felt the consequences of it, know the reality of World War I.

[21 : 45] It was a real event and there were consequences for it. The disciples came to understand the reality of Easter. It was a great moment.

God had brought about His plans. All the scripture was looking forward to this point. Death had been swallowed up.

Victory had been won. Easter. Well, what's your understanding of Easter? How do you understand Easter? I noticed in the paper yesterday, I don't know if you get the age, there's an article by Karen Kissane entitled, Soul Searching.

Even struggling churches will swell tomorrow with Easter specials, last seen at Christmas. It reports on the quest for meaning in the consumer age. It speaks about how people are no longer tied to their denominations.

They're shopping around. But the church is in decline. It starts talking about how gimmicks are needed at Easter to try and attract people's attention, to try and understand Easter.

[22 : 59] In fact, one Catholic priest here came in, went over to one side in all his gear and did a handstand, it describes. And another person would cartwheel down the centre aisle. I thought I'd do that, but I thought I might, you know, thought I might just leave it.

I thought perhaps I could do one of my tricks, you know, do some juggling or those who have seen my pee trick where I can hover a pee in mid-air. But I thought I could do all these things, but I thought, no, no, I'll leave that.

I'll spare you of those things. The article goes on to talk about the different survey that the National Life Survey Organisation has done. Oops.

Gosh, I almost lost it all. Almost didn't hear what the statistics were. 35% supposedly by this survey believe, this is people in the wider community, believe in a personal God.

There is a God and he's personal. 39% believe that there is a God, but he's a life force. It's just this force, this energy. Can't wait for the next Star Wars meeting.

[24 : 10] 9% believe, don't believe at all. They're atheists. The 17% are agnostics. 43% accept the basic beliefs of Christianity.

43% believe that Jesus was God and that he rose and those type of things. What do we make of all these statistics? I was trying to work out, you know, where do I fit in all this and all these type of things and, you know, like this supermarket mentality, the gimmicks.

How are we to understand all this? I thought, I guess it doesn't matter. the passage here is trying to drive us to see the urgency, the importance of understanding the Easter message that it was the place where God brought about salvation.

It was the place of fulfillment. It was the place of great victory. Those who know were felt the pain of death know from this that death has been swive up.

Sure, we might die, but it cannot hold us. As God has raised Christ, death could not hold him.

[25 : 30] It shows us that death cannot hold us. There is life, life with God for those who trust in him.