

## To let us in ...

The sermon preached by Rev Carol Latimer at St Serf's SEC, Burntisland,  
at Easter Eucharist on 20 April 2025  
The readings were: Acts 10.34–43; Luke 24.1–12



Alleluia! The Lord is risen!  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

If we think – as we generally-do – of life and death, beginnings and endings in purely human terms, relying on our own experience, accumulated knowledge and mental limitations, then the whole idea of resurrection makes no sense at all.

Let's face it, most people reject the Christian faith on these very grounds. No thinking person, they say, can possibly believe that a dead man could walk out of a tomb. At best, perhaps the story is a magnificent symbol of God's power and Jesus' place in the divine narrative.

But then, in all four gospel narratives we read the same sort of gritty human detail, admissions of fear and doubt and bewilderment in the accounts of the day of resurrection; so the disciples, who had struggled throughout Jesus' ministry to understand what it was all about shared our thoughts?

But ... it's this very detail that makes the gospel accounts all the more authentic.

Quoting an online source<sup>1</sup>:

“This lack of spectacular detail itself speaks for the historicity of the New Testament documents. There is no attempt on the part of the writers to embellish the event of the Resurrection.”

The account doesn't sound symbolic; it sounds real, and the utter conviction, joy and empowerment of those who realised that their beloved Lord had risen from the dead dispels all doubt.

Jesus did not die and rise again for perfect people who had it all worked out. Jesus died and rose again for the people who would betray Him, ignore His word, forget His promises, and doubt His messengers. Jesus died for the very people who put Him to death, again and again. Jesus rose for the people whose minds rejected the idea of a resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ed:** this quotation, which can be found on several sites, such as <https://www.churchbiblestudies.org/luke-241-12-notes>, seems to have originated in *The Writings of John: A Survey of the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse* by C. Marvin Pate. ➤



And applying the same logic that rejects the resurrection, how likely is it that men and women living in the precarious political and religious climate that had crucified their leader would shout his resurrection from the rooftops, found whole communities of faith throughout the known world and go to their own deaths rather than deny it? And here we are.

In God's time and in God's thinking, as the risen Christ, God revealed Godself as victor over death, something no other power can claim. This thought is expressed in the first chapter of John's gospel: "4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

In our reflections on Good Friday, we dared to look into the face of such darkness: war zones; poverty; human abuse, cruelty and exploitation; the misuse of power... we could all add to this list.

But today we focus on the Lord of life, who overturned the tables of the traders in the temple and whipped them out of the building, who can overturn and transform even the utter destruction humankind brings about. God of Christ's resurrection overcomes death and can bring – has brought; is bringing – new life out of any situation.

In Luke's beautiful story, it's the women who had been at the foot of the cross and who silently followed Joseph of Arimathea to the new tomb in the garden, noting exactly which one it was, who went as dawn broke on the day after the Sabbath to finish off the job the men had performed so hastily. The women were acting in love, but not in faith. Their intention was to provide compassionate care for the corpse of Jesus.

No wonder they were perplexed when they couldn't find the body and were terrified by the matter-of-fact words of these obviously divine beings. Who seemed surprised they were surprised! "He's not here". They were looking in the wrong place. Turned out they didn't need to look anyway – Jesus would come to them. But in the meantime, yes, they had forgotten what Jesus had said. The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. And so had the disciples, when the women shared with them what they had seen and heard. They hadn't believed it, and they didn't believe it now.

There's a lovely cartoon that always comes into my mind when I read this story: The women are facing the male disciples, having told them what happened, and Peter is saying to them, "OK ladies, thank you. We'll take it from here."

Actually, Peter was the only one who believed them enough to go and see for himself. And what the women had said was true – just no angels.

Easter energises us spiritually. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. His resurrected body didn't need that, as his later appearances were to demonstrate. No, it was rolled away to let us in; to show us, as it showed the disciples, that the resurrection is not wishful thinking. It is a reality, then, now and always. Jesus did not come back to life; he was not a survivor. No, the resurrection is so much more than that. Jesus moved through death and defeated it, once for all, so that we need have no fear of it.





The resurrection is not just an interesting incident to read about; it is a reality; it is a life-changer; it is the fulfilment of all Jesus spoke about during his ministry; everything Isaiah and the prophets envisioned. When God's love and man's sin battled at the cross, God's love won and continues to win in the risen Christ.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, welcome to our gathering of the forgetful and the doubtful, the far from perfect community of disciples that is united with the women and all followers of Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection. His resurrection has happened to us and God is at work in each of us now, working to accomplish salvation. Jesus' resurrection from the dead in that garden has begun God's new creation.

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

### **Easter bonnets**

One of the refreshing things about the Easter service this year at St Serf's was their revival of Easter bonnets for the ladies (and one gentleman), crafted to celebrate the new start that Easter and Spring represent.

One of these bonnets even featured a real bird's nest (bought from the RSPB in aid of the charity) and many and varied were the creations. As befits a member of the clergy, the bonnet that Carol sported after the service was suitably restrained:



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Our picture looking out from the tomb is by Pisit Heng, a photographer from Cambodia, made available on the Unsplash platform.

