



on Sermon Easter Sunday ‘Go home and meet Jesus’
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Mark 16:1-8

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable... Amen **off**

I promised last week that we would have this psalm again. Remember? Remember also that this psalm has called worshippers for thousands of years to come and worship. Worship with thanks for being saved and celebrate life because of what God has done. This week the psalm’s meaning of just exactly what **God did** in Jesus: in claiming the rejected corner stone; in opening the gates of **off** righteousness so that we might enter – the meaning **and the cost** have been remembered as we watched and waited through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter Saturday. Waited and watched and waited... so...



Today **on** we can say – Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. 2 Let Israel say: “His love endures forever.” 14 The LORD is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation.’

Just like the ancient psalm writer *although* the focal point is quite different! ^{1*} Scholars note that today’s verses are an echo of what’s called the ‘Song of the Sea’, or Miriam’s song in Exodus 15:21. In echoing this earlier song, the psalmist is reminding us all of God’s power to rescue shown in the crossing of the Reed Sea. So v14 is a remembering of the destruction of the Egyptian army; **and** remembering their salvation. Therefore it makes sense that this psalm written after an unexpected military victory – they won! They were alive – literally, so thank the Lord for their salvation!

It’s a classic psalm of thanksgiving and celebration. The people giving thanks because the Lord had rescued – delivered – saved them. It has a ^{1*} long – long record of being used in the Christian church and I’m sure you heard the echoes of our Christian faith statements etc. vs 22 – How that ‘**stone**’ rejected by the builders is understood by us to be Jesus because of the Easter weekend. **off**

As **we are** reading it on Easter Sunday, indeed every time we read it because of our “Easter glasses’ and celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, the psalm’s meaning expands. For us it ^{1*} ‘implies that the psalmist, and indeed all who are rescued from death or a death like existence, participate in the resurrection life of the risen Jesus. **The victory of life over death**, in Jesus’ resurrection and as reflected in every deliverance of God’s people to life, now opens the way for the psalmist to process through the ‘gates of righteousness’ and give thanks’ forever. (v29)

It is as though the psalmist has made themselves a human bridge. Standing in a very profound and deeply thankful for life ‘moment’, has reached back into the tribal memories for a matching experience, brought it forward to his time and **in that act** has passed it on for us. Passed it on for our faith as we wrestle with the meaning of Easter Sunday; the news of the resurrection of Jesus; the news of victory over death; the salvation of the world and all people....

It doesn’t really matter if we accept 100% the stories **on** of chariot wheel encrustation photos on the bottom of the Red Sea; geographical mapping of the sea’s floor to show a land bridge; stories of red sea salt under the mummy of Rhamses’s toenails; the Koran’s verses; our faith ancestors in Exodus 15ff sang: -



“this song to the LORD: “I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. 2 “The LORD is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him....4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh’s officers are drowned in the Red Sea.... 5 The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. 6 Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy.” **off**

Faith is built on life – and life contains the material – the physical – touchable – **and** mystery, unknown, invisible, things of the heart.... And we always have – always **are** and always will be looking for ways to **hold both** that we might make sense of the ‘now’. ^{on} I picture it as doing our best to stand right in the middle of a seesaw – too much weight of the invisible, mystery, ‘spirit’ and life’s balance tilts... too much of the real, rational, denial of mystery... and life’s balance tilts... ^{off}



Jesus lived – he died, killed by the Roman torture method of crucifixion, but within 40 years a man called Paul was writing theology about the ‘Man – Jesus, the Saviour of the World’, followers of Jesus ‘way’ were springing up ‘everywhere’, the Jewish authorities were recognising they’d lost a battle to stamp out this ‘cult’ – and anyway by then they had so much trouble on their hands...



By 70 AD the ^{2*} Romans had destroyed Jerusalem, ^{on} besieging the city for 4 years after a revolt, stories claim that more than a million people were killed in the siege. ^{3*} The historian Josephus said: “The slaughter within [the city] was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage. The number of the slain exceeded that of the slayers. The legionaries had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry on the work of extermination. ...The Roman general said the temple was not to be destroyed, apparently, but it was burned down anyway.” ^{off}

Fact and feeling held together in matters of the faith, in the middle of all this the followers of the man – Jesus the Crucified need to know how it began, so Mark wrote: ‘In the beginning...’ Mark, the earliest, shortest, most vivid, and base of the other gospels give us 16 chapters about Jesus and only 8 verses about his death. ^{on} The original Mark c16 finishes on the ultimate challenge: Do you keep silent or do you go home trusting the word of Jesus to meet you there, that his story might be repeated in you?



Mark writes only the beginning of Jesus story; he has no end because the listener is sent home, back to their beginning to start again. If you can’t do this – you are silent in letting go of the fact and feeling; the real and the trust elements of a follower’s faith. ^{off} Mark’s presentation of Jesus has been ^{4*} called ‘a celebration of defiance because the reality was the authorities killed Jesus and it **should have been the end** – silence – ‘full stop’. **But** the stone was rolled away, he ‘has been raised’ – passive tense, Jesus did not do it to himself – it was done to him. There is no Jesus, no body in the tomb.

There is a young man (Mark, some scholars suggest), ^{on} with grave linens thrown around him – on the ‘right hand side’ (the side of power) who reminds the women of Jesus words ^(14:28): ‘Go home to Galilee, I will meet you there.’ **This** story has **no end unless** they go home to the place where Jesus started about 3 years ago... This time it is not the Jesus they knew – he has been raised, death has lost its hold on the forever of silence and separation of people and their God. Hope in the face of injustice, pain, defeat, failure, brokenness, ... A daring to trust that life has been born, lived in all fullness and will never die.



For Mark it is not the empty tomb that starts the Jesus movement – it’s the meeting with the disciples back home in Galilee as the **Risen Christ** that is the fact for him about Jesus. Those early followers, soon to be called ‘Christians’, “saw Jesus’ resurrection as the beginning. The resurrection of the *other* dead would follow on the great day to which they looked forward and on which Jesus himself would appear in glory. He was the ‘first-born from the dead’ - that means: the first to be raised.

Paul says nothing about an empty tomb, but he does share an understanding of future existence which understood resurrection as the transformation of the dead corpse into a new body of a different constituency, but without remainder (i.e. no bones left over). Paul helps us understand this ‘spiritual’ resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15. It helps explain why Jesus can materialise and materialise, pass through closed doors, and do such things as the later Easter legends of Luke relate. So on this basis Jesus’ resurrection had to mean that his previous body was no longer to be found anywhere. The empty tomb is not the start – meeting the Risen Lord is. Amen ^{off}