



## La Côte Anglican Church

Easter Sunday – Sermon from Glen Ruffle  
31 March 2024 – Holy Communion in Crassier

### He is risen! Alleluia!

We are very used to knowing the end before we even begin. We know, when we pick up the Bible, that Jesus is going to die and rise. And actually, whenever you go to see a Hollywood film, 99% of the time you know that the good guys will ultimately win.

Frodo will get the ring to Mount Doom. Indiana Jones won't die, no matter what perils come his way. The rebels in Star Wars will overthrow the Emperor.

But 2000 years ago, those disciples of Jesus didn't know what was happening. They had lived through so much with Jesus, but then their master, their Lord, was dead. And it was a shameful death, executed at the hands of unclean, hated, despised foreigners; executed as a criminal. Our Lord, our hope, our hero, was overpowered and nailed to wood. His life bled away, and he died. All those hopes died with him.

**This was not in the plan.** Yet little did the disciples realise they had already embarked on "An Unexpected Journey". Now I know that's the name of one of the films about The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien, but I think it says something to us.

Because the **expected journey** was Jesus healing Israel, then arming himself, raising up the army of young Israelite men, and then leading them to overthrow the Romans, and then establishing himself as ruler on Solomon's throne, and restoring true worship of God to the Temple.

But what actually happened was entirely **unexpected**.

On the third day, the dead man rose, and facts, the DNA of life, and all reality, changed in an instance. And because of this fact, those frail disciples ended up planting the seeds of the church and being the reason we meet today! Because of the resurrection, 10 of those eleven disciples are believed to have died excruciating deaths, solid in a new found knowledge that this world can't do anything to stop its real Lord advancing. They kill me? So what? I will be with my Lord, **and because he lives, I will live again!**

They – and we – had launched on an **unexpected journey**. It is nothing that the world would advise you. The world says go and earn money. Maximise your pleasure, and acquire things. Live in safety, increase your prestige among people, and be famous. But our Lord says "**no, follow me. Use your life for my purposes. Serve the poor. Become defamously. Lose your ambition. Serve others. Spend time alone, praying. Read an old book called the Bible. Follow me.**"

This is not in the plan! No management consultancy book will ever tell you to do this. This journey into servanthood, to sacrifice, is an unexpected journey.

So how do we walk on that journey? What guides us? Well, why not let **us start with Mary**. James and John went into the tomb, saw the missing body, believed... and then left to go home.

Does that strike you as odd? They clearly had things to do! Can't let the raising of a dead man get in the way of watching the football! Ooo, a resurrected dead man! Well, that was nice, I've got to put the oven on at 5pm, see you tomorrow.

The disciples go home. But Mary had **time**. She had **priorities** in the right order. She waited. She knew Jesus was supposed to be here. She was in the right place. So she did not rush off, she lingered. And she was the one who got the reward. She is the one who interacts with angels, and who meets Jesus. She found time to **abide**.

If you read John, you will see **Abide** is a word occurring many times. The importance of **abiding** is key to John, he mentions it about 40x in the gospel, averaging almost twice every chapter. And here we have Mary **who gets it** – she waits, she abides, and she sees Jesus. The resurrection life involves abiding, and prioritising time to be with and seek our Lord.

So the big point here is for us to take is to **prioritise rightly** and put **foundations in place for going forwards**. Any number of quiet days, worship services and studies will not help us unless we build that **private relationship with God**, spending **your own time in prayer and study of the Bible**. A US study showed that people who go to church but have no time in the Bible are less likely to be at church 20 years later than people who in their own time study the Bible and engage one-to-one with scripture. Obviously both are important, but please: pray and engage the gospels in your own time, daily, and think on it, letting it work into you.

**Abide**. Swim in the words of Jesus, think about them, bathe in them. Let them seep into you. Be like Mary, make space to abide with Jesus.

Because he's not dead. He is alive! And that – if it's right – changes reality, changes everything. Think about it: **if death is not the end, then there are consequences beyond this life. What does that mean? What does that mean for how we choose? What are the ramifications of our decisions?**

And what does it mean about lost relatives? Gone forever, or in the next room, in God's hands? **Doesn't that fill us with hope? And responsibility?**

And if Jesus rose from the dead, what does it mean about the **importance of his words?** Just how important is it to abide in his words? This is no Buddha uttering wise words, this is the **Triune God** speaking to us to guide, comfort, lead and heal us. These gospel words are so precious!

So this Easter, let us **rejoice in the resurrection** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who **took our sin, brought reconciliation through the cross and crucifixion, and offers us a future**.

Let us rejoice that we have a **hope** and a message that can change everything about how we live. And let us **listen and obey Jesus**. Let us learn to be like Mary and wait for the Lord, spend time, abide and seek him, for he will come to those who seek him; and he comes with resurrection life. It's a new life, one of unexpected starts and unexpected endings; it's a life of risk and mystery; it's a life of service and humility; but it's a life that cannot be ended, a resurrection life for the resurrection people we have become.

**He is risen! And in him, so will we. Abide. Alleluia!**