

## SERMON

Luke 24:1-12

The Risen Jesus Brings us into a New Life

Nunawading and Waverley, 17-4-22

Dear friends in Christ,

I wake up and put my legs over the side but it felt like I was getting out of a bed of soil. My feet reached a floor of gold. I wonder if I am awake. As I move, I notice that the walls are translucent pearl. I thought I was heading into the ensuite but there was nothing there and no mirror to look at myself. Energy seemed to be under my skin and I felt like skipping and jumping. The purest thoughts were going through my head; no anxiety, no confusion or anger, just joy. And there he was, unmistakably Jesus and thousands with him all smiling at me. "Do I know these people, Lord?" He laughed, "No, but you soon will". I asked him why they looked as though they were made of stars, glittering and shimmering as light rippled through them. "That is the Holy Spirit Wayne and it is what you are made of, too." "Amazing!" "Where is our Father?" I added. "He is waiting for you; he likes to do things more formally." "Will it be like a church service?" Another laugh from the Saviour. "No, you silly sausage. It is a party in your honour." "Awesome!"

We spend too much time engrossed in this world and because the Bible is unfamiliar territory, many not entering into each day and prayer is sporadic, the resurrection seems like a fairy tale. Yet, it is the other way round. What we are so absorbed in ends, breaks down, friends and family die, disasters occur, relationships end yet we think life is here. **Why do you look for the living among the dead?** Is a question the angels should be asking us. Life is definitely not here and this really isn't living.

We live in a walled city. Every human being is adding bricks to that wall each day. We act selfishly; another brick. We fail to do God's will; another brick. We are greedy, we hurt others, we hold on to harsh thoughts, we have bad desires and lusts; more and more bricks go on to that wall. Did we honour the Lord, thank him, surrender ourselves to him, serve, give generously, act wisely and loved radically? More and more bricks on that wall so that it is as high as Everest and we are locked in. The risen Jesus has broken through those walls and comes today with a gift of life with him.

The resurrection of Christ is not based on our wish for everlasting life. **He has risen** means he died. God gave his Son over to be tortured, into the hands of wicked men, to those who accused him falsely, who rejected him, betrayed him, denied him and deserted him. God faced the wall we created and suffered to set us free from the consequences of that wall: that lack of purpose we feel, the grief over failed marriages, the degraded life so that we lose all respect of ourselves, that indifference or that idolisation of money and material things. God had to obtain the resurrection for us through a great feat of sacrifice and suffering. So the resurrection could not be a projection of our wishes.

The words of the angels, **He is not here. He has risen**, are the words of the gospel, good news telling us that Christ has dealt with the wall that separates us. Today, he is inviting you into his glorified presence. These words were spoken from a grave yard, our final resting place we call it. Because of Christ, the cemetery is not the end. Next time you enter a grave yard, you should be telling ourselves, "Soon, I shall not be here. Christ will return for me and raise me to life."

**The words seemed to them like nonsense.** I wonder if this is how Christians feel in Ukraine? Around them are buildings demolished. Scenes of destruction, slaughter and war. Imagine defiantly shouting in the rubble, "Christ has risen." I hope that the resurrection is more real for them than ever before. On Tuesday, I had a call that my 45-year-old nephew has bowel cancer. Early, Thursday morning, I received another phone call informing me that my wife's mother has had a severe stroke. As sad as these things are, and they rest on us like a weight, because of Christ and all he did to deliver us through the cross and empty grave, we are now children of the resurrection. My wife said that when the funeral is held for her mother (she is already facing that reality!), she is not going to wear black. I asked her if that is something to do with her faith. "Yes. I know I shall mourn but it is not black." It is time for bold faith. Put away your doubts and inner objections. Around us, people have lost hope. Our young people, some of them, do not want to have children because they do not want to bring children into this world. This is the time to share your faith and say, as we do in the creed, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead." This world is no more than a wrapping, a suit or dress. We will take it off and Christ will hand us the new clothes of eternity, his redeemed body and his power over death. We will be like Peter, who went into the tomb; **He saw the strips of linen lying by themselves.** We won't be here and the things that have been clinging to us will all be left behind. Ahead, will be unimaginable joy, peace, glory and the love of the Lord. I can't wait!