

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 10 am

The new creation now - Easter Sunday

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Online service sheet during the coronavirus.

Reading Ps 16

Reading John 20:1-23 (page 1089)

Title: The new creation - now

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

The audio file is [20\\_04\\_12\\_easter\\_sunday.mp3](#) in the sermons directory

Reflective prayer what does this mean for me Lord.....

Closing Prayer:

Close -----

"It's Jesus, the first and the last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe Home.  
We praise Him for all that is past,  
and trust Him for all that's to come."

### Exordium

A warm welcome to you this Easter morning, I'm sorry we are not able to all be together today but I'm glad you can hear the wonderful Easter message from where you are. *Let's pray refer to having read John 20*

- In the early eighties a London boy born and bred was sitting in his father's room. Being bored he put a CD on his father's CD player and laid out in the couch. "This is incredible" he thought to himself and took the CD up to his room and listened to it there. He says "it was a really earth shattering moment the first time I heard it. The blistering excitement of the virtuoso and then the intense sadness of the slow movement. There I was lying in bed crying my eyes out thinking I had no idea that something like this existed that just went deep beyond words and reached a place that I had never found before. As a kid not having a particularly good time at school, not having a particularly good time at home, there is nowhere else really for you to go and yet the music provided that place for me."
- I've done a lot of drugs and the whole point of drugs is to change the way you feel but unfortunately it has the most appalling side effects of robbing people, losing weight forgetting things and generally being unhealthy.
- Something like this, the Emperor concerto especially is such a buzz it takes you through every single human emotion, heroism, triumph, fear, anxiety, melancholy, sadness, Joy, everything.
- He met a piano teacher who said come and study with me. So that is what he did for four years until became a concert pianist. Now he performs all round the world and on TV. "I think I have probably the greatest Job in the world and even if I won the lottery tomorrow I would do exactly what I do every day, I'm a lucky boy."

(James Rhodes is a concert pianist, see general.doc for full account)

For James Rhodes this event was a 'life changer'. Ever had something like that? One can. Jesus Christ's amazing resurrection from the dead is one such event. Christ is alive now, and changing lives much more profoundly than any music can.

Christ's return to life is recorded in all four gospels but let's jump on John's shoulders and see it through his eyes.

Three parts: First what he saw, - what it meant and - what he did about it x2

### Part 1 - So firstly what did John see?

On Friday afternoon Jesus having been cruelly crucified was laid in a new tomb just outside Jerusalem. Fast forward to Sunday morning and we read:

“**1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.**

Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb first. As the sun comes up the other women are not far behind.

Mary seeing the stone rolled away rushes off to tell the disciples. (There’s a fair bit of running in this account BTW) **2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved (John), and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!"**

She is convinced that the body has been stolen.

**3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.** Peter who never won the races at school is not so quick on his feet as John!

What did John see? We often speak of the empty tomb, but was the tomb empty? **5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there....**

John saw the burial clothes, Peter, saw them too; **6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.**

John emphasizes this not only because it made a great impression but because of what Mary had just said. NO they have not stolen the body, NO.

- Imagine looking into a coffin and seeing a suit lying stretched out with no body in it.

In this case if anyone was to take the body they would have to unwind all the cloth, extricate the body and then wind it all back up again as if nothing had happened.

Like taking the packaging off something in the shop and trying to put it back again, I bought an angle cutter the other day, I could tell someone had been in the box to have a look - it’s easy to spot, you can even tell when the envelope of a letter that has been tampered with.

Why extract the body and make it look like it’s been raised from the dead when the whole point is to show the opposite?

It is the right tomb, they saw the body being laid there on Friday, and now the body has gone. John and Peter saw the linen and head piece still there. The precise positioning of the different cloths is carefully noted. The separated headpiece must mean that Jesus left the grave clothes without disturbing them. .... And they all saw it.

The account continues with Mary Magdalene, we will come to her later. John records: **Then the disciples went back to their homes,”**

### *Part 2 - So what does this mean?*

John **saw and believed.** He saw the cloth, what was it that John believed?

Jesus is alive as he said, Jesus will no longer die again, He does not need those burial clothes again unlike Lazarus, who came out of the tomb with them on. He was to need them again, - not Jesus.

Christ victory at the cross and resurrection to life is the seal of the truth of all Jesus’s words, the truth of all the predictions throughout the Bible. The resurrection shows that the Bible is ultra-reliable because it is God’s word – not man’s. It declares that Jesus Christ is God, and therefore the most important person in the universe. And that Judgement and punishment will now certainly come to all unforgiven men and women, - but eternal life will come to all his followers.

When Jesus appeared to them they could see this was not resuscitation, this was not his old body back, but a new one. Still Him, still Jesus, but clothed with a body that will not perish or die, an immortal, eternal body. Not a body for this world, that we still have, but a body for the **world to come.**

- One of the techniques in film making is to introduce the sound of the next scene before the scene changes, it can feel a little eerie. This scene transition technique is to help connect one scene with another. So for example you are watching a scene of a couple in the hallway and you hear the sound of a railway guard blowing his whistle, a moment later the scene changes to a railway carriage and the man is sitting on a train as it pulls out of the station.

So Jesus’s new body is showing the next scene for his followers already, - ahead of time.

So when Peter asked "**Lord, where are you going?**" Jesus replied, "**Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.**" Joh 13:36

- ✚ Yet it is here in this world, showcasing what is to come, the new creation overlapping with this one.

When at a funeral you stare at the coffin, or visit a cemetery wondering is there a life to come? That life to come - has already entered this world. The dead are raised for the resurrection of the dead has already happened. First with Jesus - and also for his followers – who will one day follow Him.

- The resurrection is like the joy of two tunnels at the moment of meeting.
- It is not only like going through the jungle and discovering the new land of paradise, or the back of the Narnia wardrobe in C.S.Lewis' books into a new world, but that new world coming into this world!

Would you love that new world to arrive in it's fullness now!

Many people speak of the troubles they are going through, and who doesn't have them? Their mind is on how to find relief from the suffering. We understand, no-one likes to suffer. But it is sin that is behind the anger, the relationship breakdown, separation, rebellious children, debt, sickness etc?

No-one says it like this, or sees it like this, but that is the truth of the matter. Again we don't use this kind of language but our great desire is to get back to the garden, to the place with no pain, no misery, no suffering.

But what was it that made the garden so special? In it man and women were sinless and in a right relationship with the Holy God who made them, and put them and us, here in this world.

The moment they sinned they were out of the garden, banished, into this corrupted miserable world of suffering and death, an existence far from God

No-one can come back to the garden without first dealing with that issue of sin. That same attitude of refusing to give God his due and rightful place, to not have God as God but instead of wanting to be the centre is behind all sin

✚ **My sin blocks the way to me experiencing God's favour.**

There are many who wonder, are perplexed, "why isn't God helping me, I pray, I ask Him, but nothing". That god doesn't exist. He is not the Holy God of the bible.

If you were to come to God - as you are - He would strike you down, the bible makes that very clear.

However, God in his love, has made a way, The Way, through His Son, given over to death, given over to suffer, rejected, spat upon and lead out to die to pay for sin. Here we see how serious sin is - Now will you see how serious sin is?

Jesus we are told **6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (or slave), being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!** Php 2:3-8

3a

- Would it surprise you to hear that the earliest known visual depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus makes fun of it?

It's the ancient equivalent of schoolboy graffiti, but it's significant nonetheless. Scratched into plaster, it depicts a figure with the head of a donkey hanging on a cross, beneath stands a man with his hand raised in reverence. Below it is a caption which reads: '*Alexamenos worships his God.*'

**To be clear, the ridicule is not that Jesus died, but that he was executed as a criminal in the most shameful way possible. That was something to mock.**

Here through this alone can we regain what we lost in the garden, forming a new humanity in the process; as that which brings about a release from slavery to one owner - into the service of another; it's the place where reconciliation between God and man is made, enabling you and I to be declared right with God.

Last week, on Palm Sunday, we saw Jesus riding on a donkey on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus the Champion on his way into battle and through his death to become the conqueror.

We can now share in this supreme victory over the powers of darkness and death...

'through his blood' and 'for our sins' makes clear the substitutionary nature of Jesus' sin-bearing death. So it is as Jesus heads towards the cross, he takes on the role of the servant spoken of in Isaiah, suffering and dying on behalf of others, where **'the punishment that brought us peace was on him'**

Crucially, all this flows from God's love. Far from involving a cold transaction, the cross is rooted in the heart and actions of a loving God.

Christ and the cross is the place that God will meet with you. Have you yet to come to Him?? If you are distressed by your sin, if you are determined to turn from it, and if you will kneel humbly before God – then He will willingly extend his had to you.

How can I know I can be forgiven? Today, Christ's resurrection to life confirms payment has been accepted by God the father to all who will come.

**9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth and under the earth,** Php 2:9-10

Every knee, your knee will one day bow before Him, come now quickly before it is too late.

3b

### Part 3 - What did John do about it?

John sees the grave clothes, sees the evidence, sees the significance and believes. John **saw and believed**. He interpreted what he saw... and did something about it. That is what we should all do with what we know – act on it.

- The conquering phrase: Veni, vidi, vici attributed to the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar The phrase is used to refer to a swift, conclusive victory. Now Veni, vidi, fidei - I came, I saw, I believed

Overwhelming evidence demands a verdict. You and I have overwhelming evidence, So be like John and act on it - and put your trust in Christ alone.

#### In John's account there is Peter

Don't be like Peter who sees the evidence - but does not understand. The account said Peter **saw**, meaning in this case he 'gazed' upon the strips of linen. Peter impulsively went on in and 'beholds' it's a vivid term, he takes careful notice, not a mere glance such as John gave. (RWP)

He sees the evidence - but does not understand - it is only later. Here is a man who has heard Jesus speak but didn't listened carefully. He is quick to speak but slow to listen, and therefore doesn't understand.

#### In John's account there is Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene is the first at the tomb, she sees the evidence but it doesn't register. There is a disconnect. The evidence is nullified by her emotion. She wrongly interprets what she sees thinking the body has been stolen.

The angels challenge Mary over her crying. Jesus challenges her over her crying, and thinking that he's the gardener she blurts out her worst fears.

**The result is she is not expecting the Saviour - so it is only then, with her head turned, and her name called, that she wakes up to the wonderful truth.**

Mary had allowed her tears to blur her mind, her emotion to dull her reason.

- ✚ Are you like that? -Do not let emotion get in the way of seeing the truth.

#### The disciples together

**19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.**

Sadly the light of understanding did not come even to the disciples until after the resurrection, and even then only gradually. They were slow to believe.

Mark records: **"When they heard that Jesus was alive and that Mary had seen him, they did not believe it."** Mr 16:11 Why not? He said he would !!

**"Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen."** Mr 16:14

How slow they were to believe – Thankfully later the disciples showed they did and went our courageously to preach that other too should believe.

#### The unbelieving Thomas

Thomas, like us today didn't see the evidence, only heard, he could have believed what the eyewitnesses said but he wouldn't. Thomas was stubborn.

Thomas's unbelief and subsequent faith in Christ are included in John's story to illuminate his main purpose—to lead to faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

John wants you to believe, that is why he wrote his account, **"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."** John 20:31

- ✚ You and I can - and should, what's stopping you, you can now, today

To belong to Christ means you can be sure of what is to come. **By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.** 1Co 6:14

- To parachute out of an aeroplane is the strangest experience. Most of the time you are high in the air. You gaze around, everything is a huge panorama, the ground, a long way below feels distant, there's no connection. Then suddenly there is what is called the 'ground rush'. That disconnected feeling quickly goes and the ground races up to you. And before you know it - bump you are there.

Living in this world the world to come seems remote, - but it will come before you know it. Imagine this is your last day, soon, today, suddenly, you are before God.

For someone who has never bowed the knee it will be a time of great dread.

- ✚ But for a follower of Christ that day will be better by far.

- Easter is an old word possibly derived from a German word for 'east', which comes from an even older Latin word for 'dawn'.

The life changing experience of finding the risen Christ means this dawn is not an uncertain hope - but a new reality of unrelenting Joy. Challenge **End**