



Easter Sunday Service (04/04/21)

## The Empty Tomb

*Prepared by Kathryn*

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and saw the linen wrappings, but he did not go in.



Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there and the cloth which had been round Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen wrappings but was rolled up by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) Then the disciples went back home.



Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her. She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!" Then she turned round and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?" She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned towards him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher".) "Do not hold on to me," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God." So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

**John 20: 1-18**

## Happy Birthday

to Sue H  
(8th)



and  
Mervyn (10th)



God Bless  
You Both!

Christ our life,  
You are alive - in the beauty of the earth  
in the rhythm of the seasons  
in the mystery of time and space, Alleluia

Christ our life,  
You are alive - in the tenderness of touch  
in the heartbeat of intimacy  
in the insights of solitude, Alleluia

Christ our life,  
You are alive - in the creative possibility  
of the dullest conversation  
of the dreariest task  
the most threatening event, Alleluia

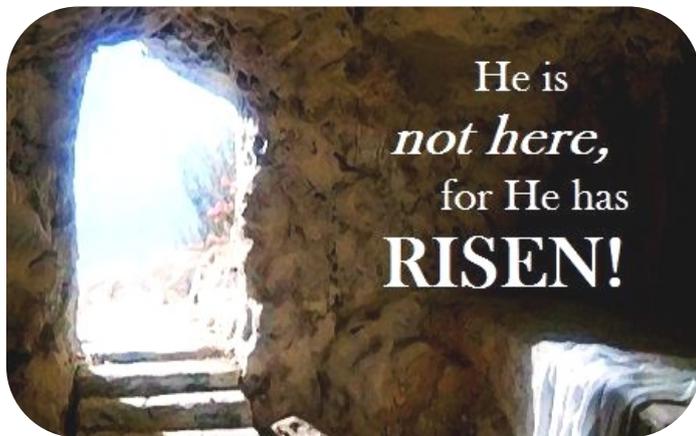
Christ our life,  
You are alive - to offer re-creation  
to every unhealed hurt  
to every deadened place  
to every damaged heart, Alleluia

You set before us a great choice.  
Therefore we choose life.

The dance of resurrection soars and  
surges through the whole creation,  
This is grace, dying we live.

So let us live.

Kathy Galloway



Hello, welcome on this Easter Sunday to our service, we hope and pray that whatever age you may be, you will experience the hope of the resurrection of Jesus in a really meaningful way. Over the last few days, we may have, in our hearts and minds been reflecting on the journey that Jesus took in the penultimate days of his life here, from the moment that he set his face toward Jerusalem knowing what awaited him there, to the moment that he cried out triumphantly from a wooden Roman cross of crucifixion, "It is finished!" We may have thought about his body, mutilated and battered laid in a tomb as the forces of darkness gloated in apparent victory, little knowing that a more powerful law of life over death was already in operation. A tomb shut off by a huge stone, sealed by order of Pilate and guarded by ruthless roman soldiers.

That's not where the story ends. Despite it being absolutely impossible to access that tomb, three days later and that tomb is empty. **How could that possibly have happened? What does it mean?** Today we're celebrating that empty tomb and how that event on the greatest day in history changed everything

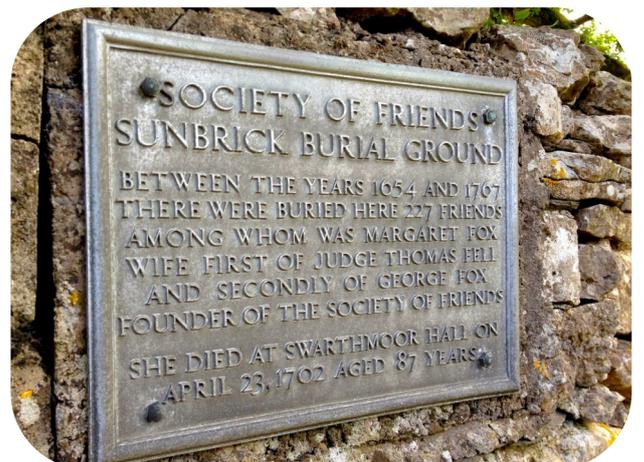
Birkrigg Common is a place that we know to be associated with ancient burial sites and empty tombs. Within this ancient stone circle the remains of 5 bodies were removed during excavations from this ancient grave in 1911. This grave along with others littered along the ridge and elsewhere on the common are now empty tombs, the bodies have long disintegrated. This ancient burial chamber in Urswick is another example of an empty tomb. Here is this peaceful spot on the common were buried 227 quakers, between 1657 and 1767, including Margaret Fell, one of the founders of the Quaker movement. This common is not just an ancient burial site and a resting place for the Quaker people, but also if local legend is to be believed, an elephant belonging to a travelling circus passing through Ulverston sadly passed away and was brought up here at night to be buried on the common somewhere!



The tomb we are thinking about today is not empty because the body was taken away or because it had dis-integrated over a long period of time, but because something previously impossible happened and the body inside was raised to life again and the huge stone blocking the entrance was supernaturally rolled back, breaking the seals and terrifying the soldiers who now stood to lose their lives for negligence.



This is the first tomb ever to be empty because the person inside has been raised to life again. The account of what happened very early on that Sunday morning can be found on the front page of these notes.



**How could it possibly happen?**

**No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” John 10:18**



How could Jesus achieve the impossible and rise from the dead? I mean, when you're dead you're dead! Right? Not only that, the injuries that he had sustained could not possibly facilitate life inhabiting that body ever again.

Let's have a look at what was going on here.

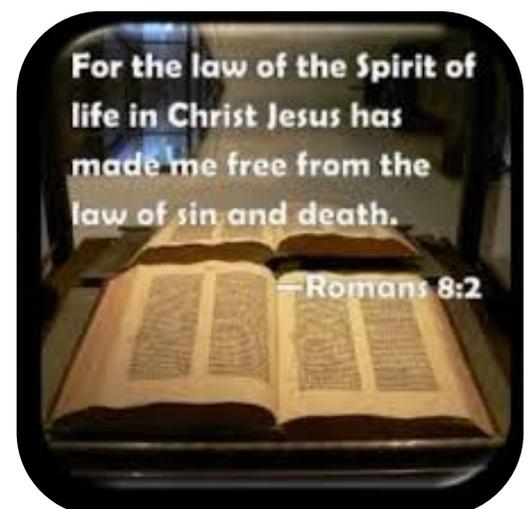
There is a spiritual law that operates across this planet since man became separated from God and it operates through the choices we make. That law is known as , “The Law of sin and death”. The Bible simply states how that law operates... **“the soul that sins, it shall die Ezekiel 18:4 ..... the wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23”**



In other words, our thoughts, words, actions and attitudes are rooted in our inherent sinful nature, brokenness, selfishness and pride and produces corresponding fruit, which has caused *spiritual* death in us already and the certainty of *physical* death to follow.

**So, what's different about Jesus?**

Everything Jesus did in his life here in our world, his thoughts, words, attitudes and actions did not spring from a sinful nature. He operated under a different spiritual law known as, ‘**The law of the spirit of life**’ He was the Son of God, he had a divine nature and although there were plenty of opportunities and attempts made to derail him so that he would succumb to **“the law of sin and death,”** he never did!



He was able to do the most amazing miracles, yet he never succumbed to showing off!

He drew crowds, yet was never tainted by an inflated ego seeking self glorification.

He had power over the natural world, the arena of sickness and disease, and the spiritual realm, yet he never used that power to exploit or diminish anyone.

He had beautiful women among his followers and held them in the highest esteem, never devaluing them or dishonouring them as was so prevalent in the culture.

He had the knowledge and wisdom to silence his accusers and those in power and yet during his trial, He remained silent.

At his weakest point physically, having done a fast for 40 days he is targeted specifically by Satan with powerful temptations of world supremacy outside of God's plan in an attempt to entice the only human being to operate out of the law of the spirit of life to succumb to the law of sin and death.

But Jesus never did. All his choices, words, thoughts, attitudes and actions sprung from the source of life within him, his divine nature. The consequence of choices sourced in life are life. Life and more life!

That's why the tomb was empty on the 3rd day. In Jesus's life there were no wages for sin payable. There was nothing on his account! Death could not cling on to him by even the smallest margin of error and so, *LIFE* bursts out of the tomb; not a mutilated, crippled, broken, contorted body that needs years of medication, surgery, rehabilitation and therapy, but a victorious, whole, resurrected body which the bible calls a 'first fruit'

### **What does that mean?**

A 'first fruit' is the first of a crop that is still to come. The first fruit paves the way for the rest of the harvest which is to follow at a slightly later date.

If Jesus body risen from the dead is the first fruit, who are the rest of the crop? That's you and me and all those whose faith in Jesus qualifies them to share in his resurrection.

**Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; " John 11:25**



Here's the thing .....

It was always Jesus intention and purpose to lay down his life and to take it up again. That was the plan all along. Human beings did not orchestrate and execute the events of the Easter story, even if they thought they did at the time.

Jesus voluntarily went to Jerusalem at just the right time for the express purpose of handing himself over to be crucified. To lay down his life to pay the price for all the hideous out-workings and manifestations of sin throughout the centuries that have robbed us of our relationship with our creator and Father.

He placed himself voluntarily into the powers of those who came to betray him and arrest him.

He remained silent throughout his trial rather than vindicate himself and call on the angelic heavy brigade to storm the place.

He was in charge from start to finish. He began the story and he ended it, crying in a loud voice... "it is finished"

**'... no man takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own choice and I take it up again'.**

**What does his resurrection mean for you and me?**

Jesus offers his victory over the law of sin and death to you and me. To experience the law of the spirit of life take root in our lives as The Holy Spirit empowers us to live as citizens of God's kingdom, heals our hurts and forgives our sins.

Through faith in all that Jesus has achieved for you and me, we can experience a new dimension of spiritual life that is beyond anything that we ever dreamed of and it starts now!

But more than that.... He offers resurrection life to these physical bodies, bodies like ours are part of the rest of the crop ready to follow in the trail he has blazed and rise again with new bodies like his, victorious, glorious bodies.

The hope of the resurrection changes everything. It gives hope where there was no hope. It sets our feet on firm foundations where the impossible is now possible, where no circumstance, struggle or mistake is beyond redemption and restoration. A life where the law of the spirit of life operates within us, changing us, taking us from strength to strength, glory to glory, and when that day comes that we slip through the shadow of death, we can be at peace because Jesus entered into our death, defeating it and paving the way for us to rise again when he returns!



As we close our service from this ancient site on Birkrigg, a place of burial, but also - even today - a place where people come to regularly engage in spiritual activity. What better place as we look across the bay and take in the beauty around us to declare that Jesus is alive. Our closing words are from Paul recorded in Acts 17.

<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> ‘For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup> “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit be with us all both now, and evermore. Amen**

# Happy Easter!

