

We all carry certain **hopes** and **dreams** within us

Easter – 17 April, 2022

BIBLE READINGS

[Luke 24:1-49](#)

On the first day of the week, early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.”’ Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ...

Now later that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him. He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’

‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. ... Some of our women amazed us this morning. They went to the tomb early, but didn’t find his body. They told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said Jesus was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.’

He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ...

Later those two disciples returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' ... While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.' ...

He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

MESSAGE - We all carry certain **hopes** and **dreams** within us.

During Covid lockdowns, our hopes may have been simply to remain **healthy** and for the chance to meet again **face to face** with our family and friends.

For young people, hopes and dreams may involve **study**, **travel**, finding the **ideal job** or meeting the **ideal person**.

For older people, hopes and dreams might include **downsizing** our house and being fit enough to pursue a particular **hobby** or **travel** to a particular place. Asylum seekers that I know dream of **freedom**, being released from detention and



being able to have a life where they get to make choices.

These hopes and dreams sustain us through hard and difficult times.



But what happens when hopes and dreams turn to **disappointment** or **disillusionment** ... when hopes are crushed and dreams disappear into thin air?

When we turn to the Gospel accounts of the first Easter day, the disciples are not exactly filled with joy or singing alleluias. They are in **shock** and **grieving** over their shattered dreams. The male disciples are afraid that what has happened to Jesus will happen to them next. They are lying low trying to avoid being seen by the authorities. The women too are grieving but attempt to numb their pain by going about practical tasks such as anointing the body of Jesus with spices.

Jesus – the one whom they have recognised and followed as the Messiah – has been arrested, tried and crucified, and is now dead and buried – along with all their hopes and dreams of a powerful and victorious Messiah who would redeem Israel and bring freedom to the people. So whether it's the women going to the tomb or the disciples trudging back home to resume their former lives, the disciples are feeling **defeated** and **dejected**.

The women find the tomb **empty** ... and see a vision of angels ... who inform them that Jesus is **alive**, just as he said.

They don't suddenly start turning cartwheels or leap with joy. Rather they are **disturbed, confused** and **afraid** ... and the male disciples don't believe a word they say ... although Peter does go to the tomb to check out the report and leaves wondering ... all of which suggests that seeing the empty tomb first hand with their own eyes did not bring joy or faith. Something more was needed.



The two disciples on the road going home, with their hopes in tatters, encounter the **risen Jesus**, who walks with them and listens to their stories before pointing them to the Scriptures to explain what the Messiah must go through according to

God's plan. It's not until they share a meal with their companion on the road that they at last recognise Jesus ... which suggests that even an **encounter with the risen Jesus** is not enough to turn their grief into joy. Their thinking is so focused on what they have lost that they can't see what or **who** is right in front of them. But the experience of opening the Scriptures together and sharing a Eucharist type meal did at last open their eyes.

Luke's third resurrection story happens on the evening of that first Easter day, when Jesus meets with the inner circle of disciples.

Once again they are not immediately filled with joy. Rather they are filled with

doubt and **terror**. Jesus is right there with them, raised in bodily form, eating with them and talking with them. But once again the bodily presence of Jesus is not enough to change their thinking and their mood.

As before, Jesus points them to the Scriptures and explains God's plan for the



Messiah and further, God's plan for them to take this message out into the world.

Slowly the penny drops that it really is Jesus, risen from the dead, who points them towards a different way of seeing him and towards a new mission.

What might we learn from the experience of the disciples who lived through the events of Easter?

Perhaps the first point is that suffering and death are common experiences – whether we are thinking of loved ones, the last two years of Covid, or the situation in Ukraine and many other places of conflict.

Disappointment and grief are also common experiences,



but the resurrection of Jesus changes the conversation and begins to open up **new possibilities**. There can be new life and new hope beyond death and despair.

We are all wired differently, though, and it can take **time** for the new possibilities and new hope to be grasped. The illustrations and metaphors that we use to help us understand the possibility of resurrection – of new life emerging from death – all have an element of **time** attached to them – whether it's a caterpillar spending time in its cocoon before emerging as a butterfly,



or a seed planted in the ground that grows into a new plant with flowers

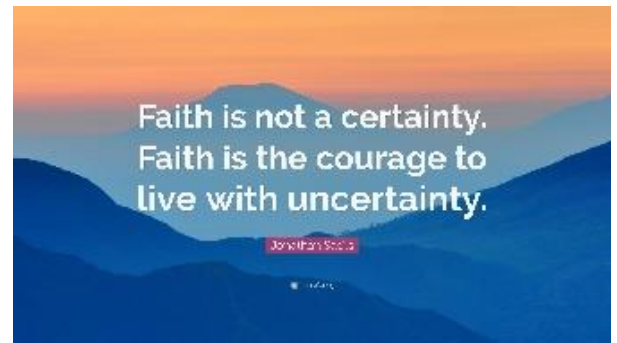


or the recovery of eucalypts after a bushfire as they sprout new shoots.



It suggests that we need to spend some time sitting with what has been lost before we are ready to embrace the new signs of life. I encourage each of you to take some time today or in the next few days to ponder and to wonder about the events of Easter and what it all means for you.

Some of us find it easier than others to live with **doubt** and **uncertainty** in our walk of faith. Such people don't need the direct evidence of the empty tomb or the appearance of the risen Jesus to have faith in him. Such eye-witness testimony didn't help the disciples too much on the first Easter day.



But what did help – over time – was a reading of Scripture with new eyes – looking for signs that point to Jesus based on his experience of rejection, suffering, death and then exaltation. Such signs were found in many psalms and in prophetic books such as Isaiah. So God may well speak to us through our experiences but also speaks to us afresh through the Scriptures, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

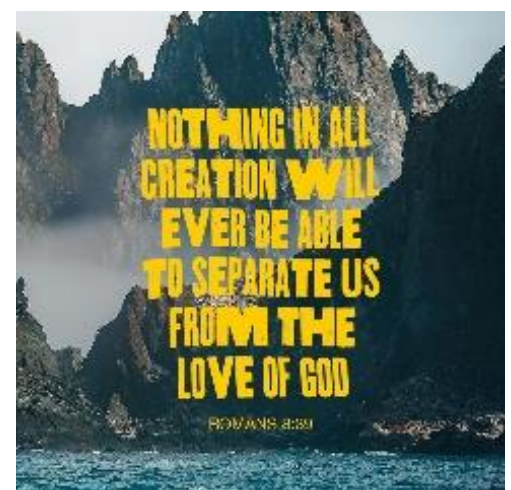
Similarly, we may meet the risen Jesus through our experience of **community** or through **sharing sacraments** such as Communion.



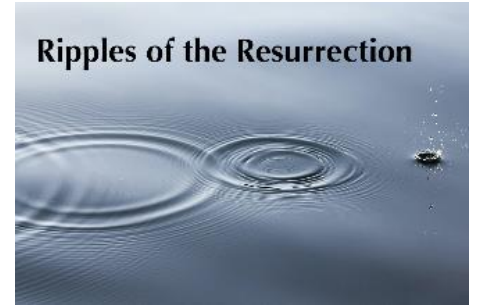
The book of Acts speaks about the **Spirit of Jesus** being with the community guiding their direction and giving them hope. Such a spiritual encounter with the risen Jesus changed Saul the persecutor of the church into Paul one of its boldest witnesses. So a prayer we pray for each other as we gather for worship is that we would know Jesus' presence with us as we listen to the Scriptures and share stories from our lives.

As we take time to reflect on the surprise of the resurrection, we may come to see the world and our faith differently ...

We may grasp the truth that **nothing can separate us from the love of God**, not even suffering and not even death. Next week we will be celebrating the life of Anne Amos and one of the truths we will affirm is that death does not separate us from God. It's why a Christian funeral has so much more hope and joy than a secular funeral.



The resurrection of Jesus happened at a particular moment in history but the ripples of that moment are ongoing. Those of us who work for **justice** and engage in **peace-making** sometimes feel tired and despondent, as if nothing will ever change. But the death and resurrection of Jesus suggest that our work is not in vain, just as the life and ministry of Jesus was not in vain, but rather inspired many, many others to take up his example.



We live in a time of **cancel culture**, where famous people can be cancelled or ostracized because of their views or actions, people like film producer Harvey Weinstein or Australian politician Christian Porter.

In Jesus' day, the Jewish authorities tried to cancel Jesus due to his outspoken ways but the resurrection is God's emphatic '**yes**' to Jesus

Finally, there are many ways we might think about God and the events of Easter help shape our perceptions of God. The story of Easter suggests that at heart God is about **life** and **love**, is about **vulnerability** and **strength**, and about **relationship** and **restoration**. The late Desmond Tutu summed up the character and actions of God in succinct fashion, based on what happened at Easter ...

Goodness is stronger than evil,
love is stronger than hate,
light is stronger than darkness
and life is stronger than death.

*Goodness is stronger than evil.
Love is stronger than hate.
Light is stronger than darkness.
Life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours through Him
who loved us.*

Desmond Tutu