

Sunday 17th April 2022
John 20:1-2 & 11-18
Rev.Scott Burton
Brightons Parish Church

Sermon keypoints:

- The resurrection proves Jesus has secured the new earth and heavens
- Jesus doesn't deny the hard realities of this world (vis-a-vis 'naive triumphalism')
- Jesus is with us because He is alive (vis-a-vis 'gloomy dualism')

So, boys and girls, hopefully you had your listening ears on there because I'll have a couple of questions for you in a moment. But, have you had a good Easter break? Have you all had a good Easter break? Ready to go back to school and nursery, yeah? Probably the parents and grandparents are more eager for that than you are. But here is a question I have for you this morning. It's about, now what's going on here, I'm not quite sure. There we go. The question is: What has changed in the last two weeks in your life in the last two weeks? What has changed in your life? It might be something you can think of that is a big thing, a small thing. It could be a good thing, could be a bad thing. And this is not just for the children, this is for everybody to think about. In the last two weeks, what has changed in your life? See what you can come up with, I'll give you 30 seconds to have a chat with the person next to you, and see what you can come up with. What has changed in the last two weeks?

Thank-you.

So, hopefully you came up with some interesting things. Anybody want to shout out or share? Anybody down the front anything what to share? What's changed in the last few weeks two weeks?

Shout out.

Three new chickens! Whoa exciting! Someone else? Anybody over this side? Upstairs or downstairs? Something you want to share? What about anybody in the middle? Could be a young person, could be an adult, that you want to share something, anything. What - you're three! Oh, exciting. Did you have a good time celebrating? Did you get some birthday cake? Oh nice! What about over here ain't nobody, Daniel Emily?

What? New drawers, okay, just making sure I heard you right there and Emily? Your room's tidy. Hey good job, good job!

Well these are some really, I didn't expect most of these answers but these are really great answers. Things that you notice, things that changed. But, you know, in your life there are things that have changed that you clearly didn't think about because you didn't name them this morning. So, for example, do you know that your hair has grown on average 5.6 millimeters? I know, you can't tell it from my hair but I shave it every week. Okay now, or your fingernails? Your fingernails on average have grown 1.2 millimeters in the last two weeks and you probably didn't even notice because you've been nibbling away at them. Or what about our planet? We know that our planet is spinning round and it also goes in an orbit. In the last two weeks alone, you have spun 204,000 miles in the last two weeks alone. As part of our orbit you have moved 22 million miles and you didn't even notice. Like, oh, that's nothing! These incredible things are happening and

we don't even, we're not even aware of them, and the same was true that first Easter and our story, boys and girls, there were four people. There was the two angels but there was also two main characters. Who were our two main characters? Anybody want to stick our hand, can you remember two main characters other than the angels?

Emily – Mary. Did you see Mary? Yeah. And who is the other one? Shout out together – Jesus, Jesus. So, that was the first Easter and so we tell the story that Jesus died on the cross after being in the garden where he was praying and then where did they put His body - in the tomb, that's right and so Mary goes to the tomb but she's really upset because what does she find has happened? What's happened on Easter Sunday?

Did it disappear? The body was gone, the stone was rolled away, yeah, it's been moved. Now, why would she be upset about that? Why would she be upset at that? Hope, hand up please, okay, someone else, you've answered a couple of questions. Anybody else willing to brave any answers? Up the top at all? No, okay, we'll go back here then. Why would she be upset? Shout it out,

She couldn't see Jesus's body. His body had disappeared. She thought someone's taken it. And Jesus mattered so much to Mary that she was just aghast at this and so she runs off to tell the disciples, 'Someone's taking the body of Jesus' and then she comes back to the tomb and she's standing there at the tomb just looking and she sees these two angels. She doesn't know it's two angels but then she hears someone ask a question and she turns around and someone is there. Who is there with her now? Who's there with her? Can you remember that part of the story? Who was there? Lydia - Jesus that's right. Now, did she realize it was Jesus at the start? Did she realize it was Jesus at the start? No, she didn't. We don't really know why. Maybe she was just so tearful she couldn't see passing tears. Maybe she didn't turn around enough or maybe something had changed about Jesus. Maybe something had changed about how He looked and how He was but He says Mary and she turns and she realizes it's Jesus. Jesus is alive, and she wants to just rush to him and give him a big hug like you would your best friend or your mum or your dad or grandparent. She hadn't seen him in a long time, she just wants to give him a hug. But, does Jesus allow her to get close and just give that big hug? Does she? Is she allowed to do it? Not really, because He goes on to say this to her 'Do not hold on to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I am ascending to my Father and your father, to my God and your God.' It's a really weird thing to say and probably not what you expected me to focus on from our reading, but there's something really important for us here in this, I think. Because, what do we celebrate on Easter Sunday? What are we celebrating today? What do you think we're celebrating? Anybody want to shout out?

Jesus is alive, we're celebrating Jesus is alive. But, when you look out at the world, is the world perfect? The bad things happen. Do you think all the promises that God made in the Bible, are they all fulfilled yet? Do we see heaven on earth as Jesus taught us to pray for? Not really. Our world is a bit of a mess. Sometimes it can feel like things are getting worse and life can sometimes feel pretty hard and worrying and scary. And so, we can be tempted to react in one two ways. We can kind of have one reaction that

says 'Wow, Jesus is alive!' and just ignore the world out there, or we can have another reaction that says 'You know, the world out there is a mess so Jesus can't be alive, it must just be a made-up story.' And there's one writer that I was reading just this past week, NT Wright that said we can either be in this side which is just 'naive triumphalism' but ignores the world, or we can be tempted to be on another side 'gloomy dualism, where we think 'Well, God doesn't care, it can't be real. If He is there, He's just not involved or caring at all.' Here's the thing, neither side is right and neither side does Jesus fit into because He said 'Do not hold on to me I have not yet gone to my heavenly Father.' Jesus has died on the cross and when He died on the cross, He said 'It is finished.' What he had set out he accomplished, something changed, even though we were not aware of it and so He was risen from the dead to prove that. But there's more to come, there's more to come because His passion secured a future day, a future world that will be made perfect and whole and everything will be made new. It's a change we're not even aware of, just like we're not aware of our world moving, there's a change being made because Jesus on the cross died to defeat sin and death and all the powers of evil and one day His kingdom will be all that there is and that is our hope and that is our joy and that is proven by Jesus rising from the dead.

Now, when he rose, boys and girls, on that Easter, first Easter morning and met with Mary, she was quite sad but when she realized that Jesus was alive what do you think she started to feel? What do you think she maybe felt then? Anybody willing? What do you think she was feeling? She wasn't sad anymore. What do you think? She was happy, joyful, She was because she now knew that Jesus was alive. He was there. He was present. And we might be here today feeling life is hard, we might be feeling and thinking that the world's just a mess, that holding on in faith is just too hard, or seems crazy, but we can know that Jesus is alive, we can, Easter doesn't deny the hard realities of life for the world but it reminds us that Jesus is alive, a future day has been secured and you can have that relationship with Jesus, beginning even now. You can hear His voice. You can journey with Jesus. And, maybe this Easter invitation is for you, to invite Him afresh into your life, to grow in faith, or pursue faith for the first time. And so, maybe this Wednesday evening, think about coming along to Alpha or if you can't make the first week, then come to the second, we can catch you up. Come along to Alpha, explore the faith, ask hard questions. Or maybe get involved in a group in church or read a book, or read a bit more of your Bible - but grow in faith, invite Jesus afresh that together we might say with Mary 'I have seen the Lord. He's alive, He's in my life.' And then, we too can share in the Easter joy. I pray it may be so. Amen.