

Easter Sunday Year B

A Memorial, A Re-enactment, A Celebration, A Thanksgiving Service

Jesus has risen!

Is today only a **memorial service**? If we are talking about obedience in sharing the story with the next generation, then Easter is a memorial or re-enactment like Australia Day, or the Queens Birthday weekend. But are we only remembering the story of ages past?

No, because we have experienced the power of Easter for ourselves. The women and other disciples began to share what they knew, passing it on so others might believe. The message was carried from Jerusalem, out to Judea, Samaria, into the Mediterranean, to Europe, across to the UK and down to Australia. Along this path somewhere, we received the words of the Apostles and met Jesus who brought us forgiveness and peace.

Could it be a **re-enactment**? We are remembering and reinforcing the significance of the actions done for us as we replay Easter's scenes.

But it's not exactly a reenactment, as if we are trying to keep alive a past event by fanning it into flame. It is a remarkable event in our history, but the fire has never gone out - it lights the darkness still today. And it is not dependant on us to keep it alive. God's Word is the power for salvation, through the Son. And the Spirit is at work in every corner of the world, whether or not we join in partnership with God, his life will reach others.

Is it a **celebration** of life? In the northern hemisphere yellow chicks, Easter eggs and rabbits are a way to symbolise life as Spring comes into view. As these signs speak to us too, we chose to celebrate Easter at this time, and this traditions carried it south to us.

We celebrate life, but we celebrate something much larger than the seasonal emergence of the life.

And Passion week is a sad story with a happy ending that we celebrate, so its definitely a time of **thanksgiving**. Its a significant event that has a flow on effect for us. It brought freedom and security, so its a little like ANZAC day or Remembrance Day. The celebration helps us to continue to be thankful to our God who saved us.

These things make it a rich celebration.

But if we stay with these aspects only, we live as if we have reached the end of the story. The present is influenced and a legacy is left but not a lot is required except commemoration and some commitment not to squander what was gained. We are very grateful and then go off to live our lives back in normality after we leave the event.

This IS unfortunately often the way we go about things as Christians. We ARE true believers in the message. We ARE impacted in a by Jesus life, death and resurrection. We ARE grateful and celebrate.

But it isn't the end. Easter is just the beginning. It is the start of God's new creation. The kingdom is near, it has come amongst you, it has been established. Then Acts follows the Gospels, the Epistles follow Acts, the story of the church goes on until the Lord returns. It goes on as each of us live and speak the News we know.

At Easter a completely new life has broken through at the dawning of a new day. Death has lost it's sting! The power of sin has been broken! Our enemy has been defeated!

The life we have tasted stretches into eternity, it begins by equipping us for today, gives us hope and the promise of transformation for tomorrow and sets our eyes on the new heavens and new earth which we will share with our Lord and each other when he returns.

We have peace and forgiveness in our lives, a hope in our hearts, God's Spirit enriching us each day, and the assurance of a good future beyond the gates of death.

Life springs up like living water from a fountain that never runs dry.

What is our Response to this Life?

Firstly, this news cannot be kept to yourself. It demands a retelling because it is Good News. Amazing News. The women eventually spoke to the disciples because although they were afraid they couldn't hold what they knew in. People don't always like to hear witnesses speak. It upsets the status quo, the settledness of things. And when they say things that sound impossible - remember the disciples didn't believe the women at first? But the telling of this news could not be stopped...Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus at one time,

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:39-40)

Secondly, all the accounts tell us that when you have witnessed these things you MUST say what you have seen. Jesus told his followers to tell others. We understand this is an instruction to us as well:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15)

If Easter was the end of the story, we could take the gift of Jesus, follow him ourselves, fellowship with his people and wait for his return. But that would unfortunately mean the story ended with us. It would die with us. We would have saved no one but ourselves, no

else would benefit from the knowledge that there was a lifeboat available and they could flee the sinking ship.

If the Apostles had celebrated Easter as a memorial, re-enactment, celebration or thanksgiving only, we would never have heard the it. It was meant to be passed on.

The Gospel will only move forward as seeds of new life are planted in each generation.

If we have anything to go by in the Scriptures this won't be easy. Our beliefs and our lifestyle will be challenged. We have seen this around the world every year, and issues of faith and practice come into conflict with state laws even in Australia.

Finally, our lives cannot be same as before we believed for ourselves.

If we have received the gift of forgiveness, freedom and peace from Jesus we ought to look and be different than when we were alienated from God, weighed down by sin, at war within ourselves, with others and out of sync with the creation.

We are challenged to live a life worthy of our calling in word and deed. To put aside our old ways and accept the work of God in us. If we truly believe, it will be evident in our life, others will see and hear it. We will bear the fruit of his Spirit, because of his life flowing through us. The more we walk with his Spirit the more we grow to look like Jesus. And the world will know that we are his because of what they see in us and hear from him (John 13:35)

May I encourage you to take Jesus life and share it with others. Be a witness to what you know.

Easter is a beginning.

When we finally meet our Lord we will be amazed to discover the picture we see at Easter is bigger still. With the help of C S Lewis we look to that day when we meet Jesus face to face.

“All their life in this world and all their adventures had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.” The Last Battle. C S Lewis

May we be found faithful in this life, and go on to discover the adventures of the world to come.

Easter is a happy beginning. And the best is yet to come. Amen.