

St Marc, Grenoble

Easter Day, Sunday 17th April 2022

Luke 24: 1 - 12

Acts 10: 34 - 43

Making it all up? An idle tale?

Good Morning and Welcome to everyone - especially those joining on Zoom

Jesus Christ is risen today - **He is risen indeed Hallelujah!!**

Let's Pray.

This really is one of those mornings when I really have to ask –

What hit you about today's Gospel story?? Please try and share your feelings - there are no wrong answers - it is your thoughts and emotions we need to hear.

It is only a short reading but, without any doubt, after a surprising start, it's an incredible, amazing Good News story, in the midst of strife and pain.

But, sadly, for many people that's exactly how it seems: incredible – unbelievable. If we abandon our belief there, we'll be devoid of hope and light for the rest of our lives.

In John 8: 12 Jesus told us: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

If we trust Him He will not leave us without either light or hope.

If we allow ourselves to think it is an unbelievable story, we'll flounder in the darkness, without light or hope; unable to see God's Glory surrounding us.

From our position of hindsight today, it's very easy to mock the disciples' lack of faith. But, imagine how they must have been feeling that morning ...

They'd given up their lives – their homes, their family life, their jobs to follow Jesus... They'd followed Him, faithfully, through thick and thin - through all kinds of amazing experiences, night and day, for three years?

Then He was betrayed by one of His best friends. Literally snatched from them; and, after a sham trial, He'd been brutally murdered two days earlier.

They were bereft, but also terrified the authorities may come looking for them next. Most of them were hiding behind locked doors, waiting for the knock they most dreaded.

But, very early that morning, a faithful group of women gathered (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, mother of James and some other friends). They went to the tomb where Jesus' body was laid, before the Sabbath curfew, driven by an urgent need to finish a job left undone, their final act of love for the Lord they loved so much; to embalm His broken body with the oils and spices they had prepared.

We're told, on that morning of the first day of the week (Sunday) when Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid, ready to care for and embalm His body, they found the big stone at the entrance rolled away (that was how people gained entrance to a tomb like this - which was often like a cave.) And they couldn't find Jesus' body.

Inside the tomb, there will have been a number of troughs carved out of stone, and there could have been bodies in all of them. But, elsewhere, we're told that this was a new tomb, so there were no other bodies in there.

Bodies were usually left in the troughs for about a year, by which time all the flesh would have disintegrated, leaving only the bones. The (dry) bones were then collected and placed in an ossuary jar (A jar for bones), which would have been buried in the ground, sometime later.

Imagine their surprise, bewilderment, horror, shock, disappointment and fear when they realised that the tomb was open and...empty! They were completely unable to understand exactly what was going on.

The women were puzzled - obviously, because they'd watched from a distance while Joseph of Arimathea laid Jesus' body in the tomb on Friday evening; and yet, on Sunday morning, Jesus' body was no longer there!

They stooped and went into the gloomy tomb ... Suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them – they were terrified! Quite naturally, they bowed their faces to the ground – **What happened next??**

Yes, the men said: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead - in a graveyard?" And they went on to say: "**He is not here, but has risen!!**"

"Don't you remember how He told you ... that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again??"

If you close your eyes, you can almost see the penny dropping in the minds of those poor women; as they remembered Jesus' words.

They couldn't wait to tell the others; and, rushing back from the tomb they told their story to the eleven and the rest.

Imagine the excitement, the joy - but also the total incredulity of the apostles, convinced this was simply an 'idle tale' – 'made up' by grief stricken, stressed out and hallucinating women. They simply didn't and couldn't believe them!

But, Peter, faithful friend that he was, got up and ran to the tomb.

I wonder what was going through Peter's mind as he ran towards the tomb??

Was there a stirring of hope? Or a vague recollection of some of the things Jesus had said, which nobody had understood at the time?

And, who were these two men in shining clothes, the women spoke of??

Peter arrived at the tomb, breathless – his heart pumping. He stooped, looked in and saw the linen cloths, by themselves – empty!!

Then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

What exactly was he thinking?? ...

But, right now – there are some far more important questions ...

Close your eyes and picture the scene.

Stoop down with Peter and look at the empty grave clothes laid to one side

... What are you thinking??

... What do YOU believe??

Will this moment change your life – as it changed Peter's??

Will you allow yourself to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Will you, like Peter, dedicate the rest of your life to serving Jesus??

...Only you can answer that!

This is potentially life changing ...

Let's Pray