

**EASTER DAY 17-04-2022** *The Reverend Lorna Green*

Acts 10.34-43; Ps 118.1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15.19-26;

*Luke 24.1-12*

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed 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, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened*

THIS is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day when the stone that was rejected as useless by the builders becomes the most important, crucial stone in the whole building.

This is the day of great reversal, when death is destroyed and we can say "We shall not die but live." Death is transformed into new life.

This is the day when women were the first witnesses, who saw the empty tomb and heard the angels speak.

This is the day when the men didn't believe them, thought they were hysterical or deluded, and had to see for themselves.

This is the day that begins the transformation of the world. Because of the resurrection of Jesus everything is changed- whether we believe it, understand it, or not.

Resurrection is not the resuscitation of a body; it is a transformation, and in the resurrection of Jesus we see the promise of God to all humankind in every time and place.

When we talk about Jesus, we think of his teaching and preaching, healing and feeding, and his way of always taking the side of the poor and helpless. We think of the example he has left us, and of his new commandment to love one another as he has loved us.

On this day, we remember that Jesus is much more than a good example, a good man who lived a long time ago, whose followers became the Church.

When Jesus died, he demonstrated the greatest love- love for the whole world. Then as now, most people were completely oblivious to the significance of what happened, but that takes nothing from the fact of what happened.

He had warned his followers, including the women, but they didn't understand, or didn't want to believe that their Master would die.

When the women encountered the angels at the tomb, early on the first day of the week, the angels asked them to remember what Jesus had told them while he was still in Galilee- for these women had been with Jesus throughout his travels.

Jesus had said that he would be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.

The women remembered, and perhaps everything suddenly made sense: so that's what he meant! They rushed back to share the good news with the apostles.

I wonder how those women felt when the men did not believe them. Maybe they were not surprised because they were used to being treated like children, as unreliable witnesses who told silly stories. In that culture, women didn't count for much..... But they were the first witnesses, the first to know that Jesus was alive.

Peter ran off to check for himself, but he didn't meet any angels and just went back home. It was only later, when he and the others actually saw the living Lord Jesus, that he believed.

We heard a little of Peter's first sermon to people who were not Jewish in our first reading from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. For the first time Peter truly understood that God's love is extended and offered to everybody, not only to Jewish people.

He spoke simply and clearly, telling them that Jesus preached peace, went about doing good and healing people, and was put to death- but was raised from the dead by God on the third day.

Peter's simple message was enough to convince his listeners and they were filled with the Spirit and praised God.

Today, as we tell the story and remember all this, we remind ourselves that this is the day for celebration. This is the day when the darkness of death and despair is transformed into the light of joy and hope. This is the day to praise and thank God because Jesus is alive- Alleluia!