**Easter Sunday Reflection Matt 28:1-10 12th April 2020**

I heard someone recently, muse over the great confusion and uncertainty that the disciples must have felt between Jesus’ death on Friday, and the empty tomb on Sunday. Their teacher, the Messiah, the one who could stop a storm in it’s tracks and save the boat they were in; he was supposed to have brought a great victory, but he had been executed in the most degrading way. These followers of Jesus were adrift, frightened for their lives and not knowing what the future would bring.

For us, when we find ourselves in a situation that we don’t understand, perhaps we don’t know the rules or expectations, we find ourselves becoming anxious, unsettled, even afraid. We don't know what is ahead.

When we don’t see the big picture and how it all works out, then the next step can seem so very daunting.

The thing is though, ultimately, we do know what lies ahead!

The disciples also knew what was going to happen and Jesus had spent quite some time telling them exactly what was ahead.

Mark recorded these words of Jesus in Chapter 8 of his Gospel:

**31**He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. **32**He spoke plainly about this. Mark 8:31,32

John tells us of Jesus’ encouragement to Martha when her brother Lazarus had died:

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” John 11:25,26

On the Thursday night, the evening before he died, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them and that he would come again to take them to be with him. John 14:1-4 (NIVUK)

Jesus had been preparing them over a long period of time, and in many ways. But they struggled to understand. It was just too hard for them to grasp at the time. But when they did come to understand, when the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to the bigger picture, THEN it made sense.

We also know because we have a far wider perspective of those events and we have the proof in the Gospel accounts. It is all available for us to know and accept it for ourselves.

Our reading this Easter Sunday is from the first 10 verses of the last chapter in Matthews gospel, Chapter 28, and it speaks of Jesus’ resurrection. The two Mary's went to the tomb and found the entrance stone rolled back and the tomb empty of Jesus’ body. They even find themselves speaking to Jesus himself: He is risen! All that was foretold was being fulfilled. This is the truth that they needed to grasp – Jesus could not be held by death, but was the one who destroyed death itself.

As the disciples came to learn of his resurrection and the Holy Spirit opened their minds, they came to understand.

The question for us is: Do we trust and act on what we now know, or do we just ignore it?

The answer to that makes all the difference to how we live now, and our future beyond the grave.

Today, we are living in uncertain times, and we don’t know what the next days, weeks, months will bring us, or our loved ones. It is very hard in many ways. With this virus we don't know who it will affect or when, and the figures are just too horrible to contemplate.

We may not want to face this, but ultimately, we know that one day we are going to die. We just don’t know how and when.

But Jesus has promised that if we trust in him, his words and actions, then we know that he has conquered the terrible consequences of death for us. Our attention can then move beyond the issues of this world. We can live in the context of the big picture. God loves us, and wants us to know His love eternally.

Jesus IS ALIVE! He has won victory over death and he has led the way for us to follow him. It is like he has run out a big ball of string for us to follow through the dark maze of this world. He has laid it out, and he is at the end of it. All we need to do is follow it through to the end, trusting that it leads to life and light and love and everlasting joy.

If we choose to live our life our own way, well, that is our choice. God has given us a rescue route, but if we decide not to trust Him, He will let us go. A desperately sad choice, but a choice that many make.

For those who do choose eternal life, they know that their true home lies ahead, and they live now with a restless desire to see the Lord’s grace and glory working in this world, through His eternally blessed children.

This is the glory and joy of Easter Sunday. Jesus is alive! His life is pointing us forward to God’s big picture, where we have a place and purpose.

The struggles of today will be temporary, but the Holy Spirit will guide us onwards as we set our eyes on Jesus, our resurrected Lord and saviour.

May you all know His blessings this Easter.

Amen

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