

Jesus died. Jesus rose. Jesus will return. * A monologue around Mark 16
Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

I'll never forget the first time I met Him. I was worn out after a long night of fishing when Jesus came up to me and said 'Can I borrow your boat?'

Who knew that such a mundane statement would turn my world upside down?

I was about to tell Him to get lost and find another boat when I looked away from my nets and into His eyes.

I don't know what it was – His teacherly bearing? His affable confidence? Something more primal maybe? For the first time in ever I felt HOPE stir deep down in my heart. And so I said 'Sure, you can borrow my boat.'

My brother and I pushed off from the shore with Jesus on board and it was only then that I noticed the crowd gathering on the beach (Luke 5:1-11). There were hundreds of people there, all eagerly looking at us and waiting to hear what Jesus would say. He didn't disappoint. Jesus sat down and began to teach them.

"There was a shepherd who had a lost sheep..." "There was a woman who had a lost coin..."
"There was a man with two sons..." (Luke 15).ⁱ

I had heard rumours about this guy, rumours that He Himself had claimed to be the one to seek and save the lost. Listening to Him now, I realized that I was the one who had gotten lost. And here He was. In my boat.

When Jesus had finished teaching, He said to me and Andrew: "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch." I had to stifle my laughter. Good teacher, yes. Good fisherman?
"We've done this all night Jesus" I said. "And we haven't caught a thing. But if you say so."

We put out into deeper water and immediately felt tugging on the sides of our boat. Fish, swarms of them, swam into our nets, so much that they began to tear. Andrew called to our partners to help but I fell on my knees before Jesus.

"Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). I knew my secret sins; I knew I wasn't worthy of a man like. But He smiled and said. 'Fear not Peter, for from now on, you will be fishing for people. And in my strength, you will be just as successful as you've been just now.'

Turns out Jesus had a plan for sinful men like me.

And that was the beginning of the most amazing period of my life. For three years, Jesus and I and eleven more brothers criss-crossed Judea, Samaria and Galilee, watching Jesus teach and heal and do miraculous things that I would never have thought possible.

And the whole time, we wrestled with who He was. I mean, in our little group, He said that He was the Messiah, but He kept telling people outside our group to keep it a secret. He had this limitless power at His disposal and yet He had no designs on becoming king. And so we were a little confused.

He DID try to explain it to us. Again and again Jesus said that 'the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again' (Mar 8:31 NIV).

Later on, I told my friend Mark everything I could remember about my time with Jesus and so said he would write it down for me. I insisted that he put it in there – three times, Jesus told us three times – I will suffer and die and rise again.

I have to admit that we didn't quite get it. Until that week. THAT week.

The Son of Man DID suffer many things. The Son of Man WAS rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. The Son of Man WAS killed. But after three days, He DID rise again.

Which leads me to what I want to tell you today. Looking back on that week, I realize that I learned three very important truths: Jesus died. Jesus rose. Jesus will return.

Jesus TRULY died. And the Jesus TRULY rose. And Jesus WILL TRULY return.

Jesus TRULY died.

There are rumours out there, started by the chief priests and the Pharisees, that Jesus didn't really die (Matthew 27:62-66, 28:11-14). They say maybe He fainted on the Cross and came to in the cool of the tomb.

But anybody who says that has never seen a Roman crucifixion. Those guys know what they're doing. There is no way that they would take a condemned man off the cross without making sure that He was dead; they PRIDE themselves on their ability to kill. There was a centurion RIGHT there; He jammed a spear up into Jesus' side. And He had already lost so much blood on the way to the Cross. He TRULY died.

And then there's the women too. They saw Jesus hanging on the Cross (Mark 15:40), they saw Joseph of Arimathea take Him from the Cross (Mark 15:46) and they saw the tomb where Jesus was laid (Mark 15:47). Then, the day after, when the Sabbath rest was over, they went and BOUGHT spices to go and anoint Him (Mark 16:1). They went and spent their hard earned

money on embalming materials because they knew that Jesus was dead. Joseph of Arimathea too, he laid out money for that linen shroud (Mark 15:46); if this was just a hoax, they wouldn't have laid out good money; any old cloth would do.

Jesus truly died. Which means that what He said about His death as a ransom for sin was right. He had said that He was the Suffering servant that Isaiah anticipated – Isaiah 53 – and He did exactly what Isaiah predicted:

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Jesus truly died to forgive sinful people like me. Like Isaiah said: “All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned his own way, and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (53:6). Because Jesus died, our sins are forgiven. For good. Forever. If Jesus has died then our ransom is paid.

Jesus truly died.

Jesus truly died. But Jesus truly rose.

You know, again, the chief priests would have you believe that we disciples just stole Jesus' body and claimed He had risen. But that's not the case. And I'm a little embarrassed to say that what I did that day proves it to be true.

On Good Friday, when Jesus was turned over to the authorities, when Jesus needed support, I fled. That servant girl kept saying 'I was one of them; aren't you from Galilee?' I said 'No way; I don't even know Him!' and then took off.

I was so ashamed. I broke and fled when things got rough and abandoned my friend in His time of need. *I* didn't steal away Jesus' body; I wasn't even in town. The other disciples didn't either; they'd all split up, back to their homes.

And besides, there was that sealed stone in the way. The tomb was empty not because we took the body; the tomb was empty because the body got up and walked away. Jesus truly rose.

And the way that Mark told that story should make it clear. I said to him, 'Mark, I don't think you should include the part about the women being first to the tomb; no one would believe a word they said. Why don't you just fudge the details a little so that the men discover the resurrection?' That would (culturally) make the story more believe. Admittedly, I didn't want people to know that I had run away with my tail between my legs.

Mark though insisted – ‘This is how it happened, this is what I’m writing.’ He wanted to accurately record everything exactly as it happened. And so he included the unlikely but true first witnesses to the unlikely but true resurrection. Jesus truly rose.

Which further means that death is overthrown. Its power over us is gone. When Jesus arose, the resurrecting power of God triumphed over the power of the grave so we need no longer fear death. Yes, the pain of death is real; the loss of loved ones hurts, but in Christ, all who live and believe in Him will never truly die (John 11:26).

Jesus died to conquer sin. Jesus rose to conquer death. Now neither need hold sway in our lives. In Jesus we are truly free because Jesus truly rose.

Jesus truly died. Jesus truly rose. Jesus will truly return.

As I think about the days leading up to the death and resurrection, I kept thinking about all those times that Jesus said – ‘I’m going to die but I’ll rise again.’ ‘The Son of Man will be betrayed and die at the hands of sinful men but on the third day, He will rise again.’ I keep thinking ‘if only I had believed Him. If only I had had the confidence to see that if He said He was going to die and He did, then if He said that He was going to rise again, He’d do that too.

And then I realized: there’s another promise yet to come. Jesus has said ‘I will come again.’ He sent us out into the world to tell all the nations about Him and He promised to go before us as we did that. And then He ascended into Heaven, but not before He said that He would return. Just as surely as Jesus said He would die and rise again and DID die and rise again, Jesus will come again to make all things right.

I remember Him saying, clear as day: “26 "At that time [you] will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens (Mar 13:26-27 NIV).

And what a day that will be. He will swallow up death forever. Wipe away every tear from our eyes (Isaiah 25:8). Jesus will truly come again.

And if that’s the case, then “what kind of people ought [we] to be? [We should] to live holy and godly lives as [we] look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11-12). Don’t be like me – knowing that Jesus would rise again and yet refusing to believe. Jesus has said He will come again; Jesus will return.

Jesus truly died. Jesus truly rose. Jesus will truly return.

That being the case, what should be do about it? Well, I’ve had time to think about it and I’ve come up with two things.

First, believe. Mark began his record of Jesus' life with the simple call: "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

Know that Jesus has died to pay for your sin. Trust that Jesus has risen to conquer death. Believe that Jesus will return and make things right.

If you believe in Jesus, your sins are forgiven, no matter how bad they are. Your slate has been wiped clean and your name is written in the rolls in Heaven. Don't let sin weigh you down – the memory of past sins, the temptation of future ones – instead, believing in Jesus, throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and ... run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1). "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Believe and live in the blessings of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Second, invite others to live in it too. There WAS a time with Jesus when He kept this 'Messianic secret.' He would heal people and reveal His Messianic power but then tell people to say nothing. He didn't want people to think that He was the kind of Messiah who would come in and trample other people. He was the kind of Messiah who laid down His OWN life to trample over our existential enemies – sin and death.

Now that that's clear though, now that He has died and risen and gone into Heaven, the word's out. The world needs to know that sin is paid for, that death is conquered, that the humble Messiah will come again to usher all who believe into eternal life.

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

(Mar 16:15-16 NIV).

This is an urgent message, one we need to share. Jesus has given us this mission to go into the world to tell all the nations. He will go before us and in His power we will succeed.

Jesus died. Jesus rose. Jesus will return.

ⁱ Like all teachers ☺, Jesus probably repeated imagery that He found useful for making a point.