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## EASTER DAY

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April 12, 2019

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

# EASTER DAY

Pray

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Christ is Risen – Alleluia! He is Risen indeed – Alleluia! On Good Friday, I spoke of the importance of the Cross – and rightly so. But we must not take up residence at Calvary. JESUS not only died in our place to remove and pay the price for our lifetime of sin, but he overcame death by rising victoriously on the third day – we call it Easter Day and we celebrate it TODAY! Alleluia!

There is an organisation called Christianity Works and they shared a short story on their website late last week called the Secret of the Empty Tomb:

Every year thousands of people climb a mountain in the Italian Alps passing the “stations of the cross” to stand at an outdoor crucifix. One tourist noticed a little trail that led beyond the cross. He fought through the rough thicket and, to his surprise, came upon another shrine, a

shrine that symbolised the empty tomb. It was neglected. The brush had grown up around it. Almost everyone had gone as far as the cross but there they had stopped. Far too many have gotten to the cross and have known the despair and the heartbreak. Far too few have moved beyond the cross to find the real message of Easter. That is the message ... of the empty tomb.

– Lavon Brown.

Our first reading today is from the Acts of the Apostles. Peter's brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the Gospel: JESUS' perfect life of servanthood; His death on the cross, His resurrection, personally witnessed and experienced by Peter; JESUS' fulfillment of the Scriptures; and the necessity of personal faith in Him. A note to self – a sermon should be Spirit-led and should centre on CHRIST, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The Hymn of the Risen CHRIST speaks for itself and can be found on page 6 of A Prayer Book for Australia.

Our passage from Paul's Letter to the Colossians comes under the heading of "Living as Those Made Alive in CHRIST". True Christian behaviour means putting on the new self by accepting CHRIST and regarding the earthly nature as dead. We change our moral and ethical behaviour by letting CHRIST live within us – so that He can shape us into the people we SHOULD be.

Setting our hearts on things above simply means striving to put heaven's priorities into daily practice. Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on the eternal rather than the temporal.

We should have as little desire for improper worldly desires as a dead person would have. The Christian's real home is where CHRIST lives. This truth provides a different perspective on our lives here on earth. We need to look from GOD's perspective and to seek what He desires – thus providing an antidote to materialism and sensuality. By seeking what CHRIST desires, we have the power to break our obsession with pleasure and

leisure activities and strengthen our desire to love and serve others more.

Our Gospel for today is a simple inspiration for our faith. Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” – probably the mother of James and Joses (Joseph) were at the tomb. The stone covering the entrance to the tomb was not rolled aside for JESUS to exit but so others could go in and see that JESUS had in fact risen from the dead just as He had promised.

The angel who announced the good news of the resurrection to the women gave them 4 messages:

1. DO NOT BE AFRAID – the reality of the resurrection brings joy, not fear. We should always remember the empty tomb whenever we are afraid.
2. HE IS NOT HERE – JESUS is not dead and is not to be looked for among the dead. He is alive and with His people. He has been raised.
3. COME AND SEE WHERE HE LAY – the women were invited to check the evidence for themselves.

The tomb was empty then – as it is today. The resurrection is a historical fact.

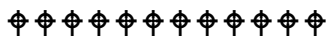
4. GO QUICKLY AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES – the women and the other disciples were to spread the joy of the resurrection – as are we to share the good news today.

JESUS' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith because:

1. Just as He promised, JESUS rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that He will accomplish all He has promised ... in HIS perfect timing.
2. JESUS' bodily resurrection shows us that the living CHRIST is ruler of GOD's kingdom – not a false prophet or imposter.
3. We can be certain of our own resurrection because JESUS has resurrected. Death IS NOT the end – there is future, eternal life.

4. The power that brought JESUS back to life is available to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life. And
5. The resurrection is the basis for the Church's witness to the world. JESUS is much more than a human leader; He is the Son of GOD.

The women were told by the angel to go and tell the disciples. On the way, they were afraid but joyful – but they ran to tell the disciples. They encountered JESUS on the way. Of course, they stopped, took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. JESUS told them not to be afraid but to go and tell his disciples – his brothers – to go to Galilee – where they would see Him. This showed that JESUS had forgiven them, even after they had disowned and deserted Him. The disciples, however, were afraid of the religious leaders and stayed behind locked doors in Jerusalem. So, JESUS met them there – and then later in Galilee. CHRIST is Risen – Alleluia!



We are in a climate where it is like being confined behind locked doors. What are we going to do when the restriction of staying at home is lifted?

In chapter 6 of his letter to the Romans Paul concludes:

<sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

When JESUS rose from the dead, He gave us – through His grace – the invitation to be, as Berni Dymet from Christianity Works puts it, *filled with the joy and the power and the certain hope, by knowing beyond doubt that every breath, every heartbeat, every step are actually part of the new life that you now have in Christ? The resurrection life that has already begun. Welcome to the secret ... the secret of the empty tomb.*

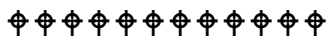
Are we going to leap for joy or emerge from this time of hibernation shielding our eyes from the light hoping that nothing has changed? Life will be different. Life IS different. We need to be able to CHANGE, to share our



faith with others in ways that are more appropriate to these current times. This may mean, in some circumstances, doing things similarly to how we have always done them – the good old Anglican way; but we also need to adapt to our changing times and communicate with people using whatever means are available. We have the opportunity NOW – to pull ourselves into the current age and re-think how we can share CHRIST’s love in more ways with not only each other but with all in our community and beyond. This is a great time for us to re-evaluate our relationship with JESUS – to prune what holds us back and to fertilise, water and blossom into the resurrection people GOD would have us become.

JESUS is no longer practicing social isolation – as He has for the past 3 days. The stone has been rolled away. Don’t Be Afraid, He is Not There, Come and See, Go Quickly and Tell Others.

Christ is Risen – Alleluia! He is Risen indeed – Alleluia!



May we pray:

On this wondrous day, O GOD, you have brought redemption to the whole world through the Resurrection of Your Son. Grant to us a new spirit of hope, a renewed faith in your covenant and a lively charity in all our works. Through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, risen and glorified forever and ever. Amen