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## ST JOHN'S DAY

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May 3, 2020

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

# ST JOHN'S DAY

Pray

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



Today, we are celebrating our Patronal Festival – St John's Day – which in our case is Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist. John, the son of Zebedee, with his brother James, was called from being a fisherman to be a disciple and a fisher of people. With Peter and James, he became one of the inner group of 3 disciples whom JESUS chose to be with Him at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. John and James are recorded as being "hot-headed" and ambitious – seeking seats at the right-and-left-hand-sides of JESUS – before JESUS explained that in His kingdom, leadership takes the form of being a servant to all. If, as is commonly held, John is to be identified as "the disciple whom JESUS loved", then he clearly enjoyed a very special relationship with his Lord

and Master – reclining close to JESUS at the Last Supper, receiving the care of JESUS’ mother at the cross, and being the first to understand the truth of the empty tomb. Tradition tells us that John was exiled to the island of Patmos – where he experienced the visions recounted in the Book of Revelation. He alone of the 12 is said to have lived to extreme old age and to have been spared a martyr’s death.



In our passage from Proverbs, GOD says that wisdom is primary and fundamental. It is the foundation on which all life is built. Paul and John may have alluded to some of Solomon’s statements about wisdom to describe CHRIST’s presence at the creation of the world<sup>1</sup>.

Psalm 97 carries the Old Testament theme of a Holy but unapproachable GOD. The people of the time are unable to find Him on their own. If He were uncovered, no one could stand before His blazing holiness and glory. People worship all kinds of images and idols. Although

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1: 15-17; Revelation 3:14

GOD reveals Himself and His love through nature and the Bible, there are many who decide to ignore or reject Him and pursue goals they believe are more important. The Bible makes it clear that these people are idol worshippers because they give their highest loyalty to something other than GOD. One day we will stand before GOD in all His glory and power. Then we will see all our goals and accomplishments for what they really are. How foolish our earthly pursuits will seem then!

A sincere purpose to please GOD will result in an alignment of our desires with GOD's desires. We will love what GOD loves and hate what GOD hates. If we love GOD, we will hate evil.

John opened his first letter to the Churches in a similar way he began his Gospel – emphasising that CHRIST – the WORD OF LIFE – is eternal, that GOD came into the world as a human, and that he, John, was an eyewitness to JESUS' life. John had lived with JESUS – having personal, physical contact with Him. He knew, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that JESUS brings light and life.

As an eyewitness to JESUS' ministry, John was qualified to teach the truth about Him. The readers of this letter had not seen or heard JESUS themselves; but they could trust that what John wrote was accurate. We are like those 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Christians. Though we have not personally seen, heard, or touched JESUS, we have the New Testament record of His eyewitnesses; and we can trust that they spoke the truth about Him.

John writes about having fellowship with other believers.

^There are 3 principles behind Christian fellowship:

1. Our fellowship is grounded in the testimony of GOD's Word. Without this underlying strength, togetherness is impossible.
2. ^It is mutual, depending upon the unity of believers.
3. ^It is renewed daily through the Holy Spirit. True fellowship combines social and spiritual interaction; and is made possible only through a living relationship with JESUS.

Light represents what is good, pure, true, holy and reliable. Darkness represents what is sinful and evil. When we say “GOD is light” we are saying that GOD is perfectly holy and perfectly true; and that He alone can guide us out of the darkness of sin. Light is also related to the truth in that light exposes whatever exists – whether it is good or bad. Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, sin cannot exist in the presence of God.

Our Gospel passage for today is the beginning of John’s version of what happened at the tomb on Easter Day. For our purposes today, we are interested only in what happened with John. After hearing the report of Mary Magdalene, John and Peter ran to the tomb to check it out for themselves. John checked it out from the entrance to the tomb and then followed Peter into the empty tomb. **HE SAW AND BELIEVED.** Respected North American Theologian and Professor Gail O’Day – who sadly died in 2018 – reflected on our Gospel with these words: Peter and John are given nothing but the

evidence of an empty tomb. The effect of that evidence on Peter is not disclosed in the passage; but its impact on John is clear – **HE SAW AND BELIEVED**. There was no angelic announcement, there were no reassuring words that JESUS has risen – just an empty tomb. In Mark’s account of the story, even though the angels witness to the women that JESUS has risen, they flee from the tomb in terror and amazement. In John, we have a different perspective – the stark reality of an empty tomb and the tell-tale presence of JESUS’ abandoned burial clothes. What does John do? **HE SAW AND BELIEVED**.

You might ask, “How can the evidence of an empty tomb lead to faith?” It was very natural for John to believe because he believed in JESUS and the trustworthiness of His promises. When he saw the empty tomb, John realised that JESUS had defeated death. He didn’t know how JESUS had done it, how it would be revealed to others or how he would even speak about it to his mates. John shares his faith with his readers – a faith that does

NOT “judge by appearances” but with “right judgement”. It is important that in 2020 we all pay careful attention to this story and linger with the witness of the empty tomb before moving ahead to stories of the risen JESUS.



Currently our St John’s church building is empty, closed, alarmed and isolated from the wider community – a bit like the disciples locked in the upper room “for fear of the Jews” and in our case because we have been directed by authorities. I look forward to the day when I can talk to people in person – and worship together as a supportive community again – which is always the best way. JESUS’ tomb is still empty too. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and our patron John went to the tomb and found it empty. So, what did they do? They went and told others that JESUS has risen from the dead – like He said He would. We have the same opportunity. Rather than keep this good news to ourselves, we are called to take the message of the Gospel to others. We are called to share this message in our community – not only with excited words but also by the way we live and involve ourselves.



Our Parish Pantry and Kinship Carers are great examples of such community involvement. Our Parish Council will be meeting this coming Wednesday. Please pray for us as we discuss how we – as a parish – will hope to move forward following an easing of the restrictions we are now experiencing because of COVID-19. What has been happening during lockdown – including the use of technology, changes to hygiene practices, social distancing etc., simply cannot be discarded in favour of going back to whatever normal means. Certainly, I look forward to returning to corporate worship at St John’s – but even that will be different. We will need to practice all the things we have been learning during this period of shutdown. We don’t know what this will look like; but it will be different. We do know that CHRIST’s tomb will be empty forever. CHRIST is Risen! Alleluia! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!



May we pray:

We thank you, LORD, for defeating evil and death and rising from the dead. Guide us as we gradually journey

from these challenging times into a time where life will be different – but exciting – with You at our side. This we pray through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, risen and glorified forever. Amen

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