“Resurrection Sunday – the best is yet to come!”

Good News from the Graveyard

9.30a.m. Sunday 16 April, 2017

Delivered by Senior Pastor Marshall Muller @ the Laidley Baptist Church (Qld).

Media Clip – Easter Drawing  (Skit Guys)  (4 mins)

‘At the Cross’ - an Easter Sunday narration:

At the Cross … Jesus became our sin-bearer;
At the Cross … Satan thought he had his prey, but
At the Cross … the disciple’s faith faded, but Jesus’ faith was in His heavenly Father
At the Cross … love for each of us held Jesus in place, not cruel long Roman nails
At the Cross … Jesus won your freedom and provided you with the gift of eternal life
At the Cross … a radical forgiveness of humanity’s sin was written in blood
At the Cross … we witnessed the greatest mystery in the universe – God dying a death of shame to redeem mankind.

At the empty Tomb … God freed humanity from the agony of death;
At the empty Tomb … God became the ultimate grave robber;
At the empty Tomb … death’s victory was stolen by Jesus. Instead of something to fear it is now something to look forward to;
At the Grave … Satan’s greatest weapon was nullified
At the Grave … Nothing could hold Jesus down
At the Grave … God’s plan of salvation for mankind did not end
At the Grave … God’s plan of salvation had just begun

On Resurrection Sunday … Satan was disarmed, disgraced & defeated!
On Resurrection Sunday … Jesus took the sting out of the fear of death
On Resurrection Sunday … you were made a child of God;
On Resurrection Sunday … Jesus made you complete and whole.
On Resurrection Sunday … Jesus stood in your place in front of His heavenly Father and he said “It is finished” and then sat down at His right hand.

What a great day in the life of every man, woman and child Resurrection Sunday is!
Blessed be the risen name of Jesus who was obedient to his Father’s will and died in my place for my sin, so that I would not need to fear death or go through the punishment I deserved.

Is there a Hallelujah in the church today?

Let’s Pray.

Our Glorious Heavenly Father,

What a day – the day your plan of redemption was now revealed to all mankind. Your plan was for me, for every man, woman & child. The once rugged & despised cross, now becomes the glorious cross of Christ. The grave, once the end to our lives, now no longer holds us captive. We have come this morning in the freedom of the salvation won for us at Easter. We are redeemed! We have been set free! We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus! Hallelujah. May today be a victory service giving glory to God.

We are thankful for you immense love for your children. We are grateful that we have been saved under the blood of Jesus our Messiah. Unite your people around the cross this morning. Unite us outside the empty tomb. May we ‘get it’ today. You are worthy of our praise. We come to worship you. May this time together be powerful, life changing and good news to all who have come to hear it.

Amen
ILLUSTRATION:  The shortest, most powerful Easter Sunday morning message ever is just 4 words! If we were to take home anything today it would be these 4 powerful words.

JESUS CHRIST IS ALIVE!

Perhaps today you wish that I would’ve preached that same sermon … a sermon with just 4 words!

Let’s read the Easter Story …

Passage – John 20:1-10

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

"The resurrection of Christ is either the greatest miracle or the greatest delusion which history records." (Philip Schaff)

The following poem was written by a soldier during World War I. It powerfully expresses what must follow if Easter is NOT true:

If death ends all, then evil must be good,
Wrong must be right, and beauty ugliness.
God is a Judas who betrays his Son,
And with a kiss, damns all the world to hell—
If Christ rose not again.
Dead End on Cemetery Road - I saw a picture published recently that was designed to get a chuckle. It showed a street sign named Cemetery Road. Underneath was another sign that read Dead End.

That picture captures the way most people think about death. They believe that Cemetery Road leads to a Dead End from which there is no escape. They believe that the grave is the dead end of life – nothing more. Against this pessimism stands the promise of Easter.

Well, I’m here to tell you that the Easter story tells us there is much more than that. The Easter Sunday story tells us that this is Good News from the graveyard.

- If death is not the end ...
- If God is God ...
- If God has promised ...
- If Christ be raised from the dead ...

What then follows from all this? If Christ has truly been raised from the dead, then these things follow as surely as night follows day:

- If Christ be raised from the dead, all his promises can be trusted.
- If Christ be raised from the dead, he is alive today.
- If Christ be raised from the dead, he is with us now.
- If Christ be raised from the dead, all things end well for those who follow him.

This is the best news of all. If you know Jesus, “all things end well.” Today may be filled with tears, tomorrow with troubles, and the day after that with difficulties galore. But if you know Jesus, then in the end when all is said and done, when we finally come to the last bend in the road, “all things end well.”

**Jesus is the ANSWER (this is my 4 word message today):**

It is good to ask ourselves how Jesus rose from the dead. The actual act of resurrection was hidden from human eyes, and the means by which God raised his Son are beyond human understanding.

But this much we know. When they took Jesus’ body down from the cross, they wrapped it carefully with strips of linen interspersed with 75 to 125 pounds of spices and aromatic resins. Those spices and gummy resins formed a tight bond with the linen cloth so that it eventually became a hard encasement around the
corpse that protected it from potential grave robbers because it made it extremely difficult to remove the linen wrapping.

After placing the body in the tomb, an enormous stone was rolled in front of the entrance. Later Pilate had the tomb sealed and posted soldiers at the entrance. The only other fact we know is that the body of Jesus, though dead, did not suffer any decomposition.

Sometime before dawn on Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the dead. From John’s description, it seems as if he passed right through the linen wrappings without disturbing them. I say that because John reports that he and Peter looked inside the tomb and saw the wrappings in the same place where they had been on Friday evening, almost like a cocoon after the butterfly has emerged (John 20:3-9). Jesus simply slipped away from his grave clothes once and for all. He arose from the dead, healthy and vigorous, bearing the scars of his suffering, yet in a glorified human body.

What does this mean for us today?

Did you know that Jesus gave us the answer to that question on the night before his crucifixion?

“Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1 ESV).

How simple, how clear, how profound those words are.

The world is filled with pain. “Let not your heart be troubled.”
There is sadness on every hand. “Let not your heart be troubled.”
We all have questions we can’t answer. “Let not your heart be troubled.”
What will the future hold? “Let not your heart be troubled.”
There is so much sickness and poverty. “Let not your heart be troubled.”
We watch war unfold in places like Syria & the Middle East. “Let not your heart be troubled.”
We’re all going to die someday. “Let not your heart be troubled.”

Resurrection Sunday morning means that when a sinner (like you or me) trusts Christ, God accepts him on the basis of the blood-bought sacrifice Christ made when he died on the cross. Jesus is the answer!
Jesus – our ‘new for old’ Life Insurance

I get asked a lot what I do – you know career wise. You probably do too. It seems to define what we think of one another. Generally the words Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ don’t go down all that well in social circles. It dries up conversations. So sometimes I decide to let people know that I’m into life insurance. But … I’m not too sure that goes down all that well either, but at least it can begin a conversation, not kill it.

When you take out contents insurance for all your possessions you can nominate what type of insurance you want. The best option on the market is ‘new for old’. You wear it out, or it breaks, or an accident happens – and guess what they give you a new one. New for old – it’s the policy … automatically, no questions asked.

God has given you a new for old policy. And not only that, God has paid the premiums once and for all. No more to pay.

On Resurrection Sunday – Jesus task was your life insurance (new for old). He was prepared to die for your future, and to stake his life on it.

We did not deserve our sins forgiven & a home in heaven – that was God’s grace. We deserved death, but got eternal life – that was God’s mercy.

The best is yet to come

A number of years ago working for our last Church, a decision was made to sell the Church manse. We were living in it and so we had to vacate and find another place to live. The Church manse was big and had lots of rooms, a great view of the harbour (so we thought), big room downstairs for my table tennis table and it was only 30 seconds from the Church.

But we had to find another place to live. As I scanned the internet for rental places, I found one available in a nice area. We went up immediately and had a look and couldn’t believe our luck. It had only just come onto the market and it was enormous. It was built around a rainforest, had underfloor heating, a main bedroom that was about 10m long and fully double-glazed glass with an astounding view of the harbour and the mountain. When it get cold, it snowed there – it was half way up Mt. Wellington. No lawn to mow – just rock gardens. Wallabies, echidnas in the back yard. Room for the boat. And the people who wanted to rent it, just wanted
good tenants. At a fraction of the price that it could’ve been rented out for. Even though we really like the close proximity to our workplace, God reminds us again & again that the best is yet to come. And it has … we’re here now in Laidley with all of you!! Amen.

We need to understand that the best is yet to come. Christ destroyed sin and death in his body, through his death, burial and resurrection, so that we would not have to be afraid. So that we could confidently say, the best is yet to come.

When we moved into one of the houses in Tasmania, they do a Condition report – over 1000 photos of the house we are moving into. The Real Estate agent told us to review them and be aware of them, and then sign the condition report. We have to put up with a house with over 1000 things wrong. So I’m wondering who is going to fix these things? Is that good enough?

We all have a condition report. We know the things that are wrong. There are thousands of them. Resurrection morning wipes out your life’s condition report. All the stuff that’s wrong that people notice, doesn’t matter a hoot any more. Christ has fixed everyone in one 3 day period in the history of humanity. Hallelujah. Now that’s Good News.

And it keeps on getting better (remember, the best is yet to come)...

1 Corinthians 15:50-56
50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” 55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is risen … He is risen indeed!
MEDIA CLIP – Easter Drawing (Skit Guys)

What a fitting way to close our Resurrection Sunday service. We are going to share in Communion together. But prior to that we’re going to sing ‘Jesus Messiah’. We're going to sing about our Messiah Jesus and the great exchange that happened on the cross at Easter – His life for mine!

Come stand with me and give all glory to Jesus as we sing.
During this song, can our helpers please come to the front?

SONG – Jesus Messiah

COMMUNION

All those who love the Lord are invited to the Communion Meal. Those who identify with the blood & body of Christ and have accepted the great transaction of forgiveness of sins on the Cross, and have bowed their knee to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith are welcome to partake.

At our Passover Meal here on Tuesday night, we heard the wonderful account of how God provided freedom for His people (Israel) from their slavery in Egypt. A great redemptive story. Out of this story, and in the tradition of the meal at Passover, Jesus takes two items from the meal – the unleavened bread & the wine – and introduces a new covenant. A covenant that now remembers His death on the cross and the price that was paid for our sin, to give us freedom.

His body was given for you & me, tortured, disfigured beyond recognition Isaiah 53 says. His blood that flowed freely from his wounds, down the cross, so that it would cleanse your & my sin-stained lives ... forever.

Because of this one event – the death of the innocent Son of Man (God's only begotten) – you and I go free. We can leave this place knowing that the price for my sins have been paid for. We can know for sure that eternal salvation has been offered to us. We can come to the realization that the scars don't represent accidents or pain ... but love.

We’re going to watch a short media clip ... and then we'll give thanks for the once-and-for-all sacrifice on our behalf. Then there will be an opportunity to hold the bread (the Body of Christ) in our hands, and reflect, before we eat. We will also hold
the cup (the Blood of our Saviour Jesus) in our hands, thankful for it’s cleansing power to destroy sin – my sin.

But may we also reflect and give thanks this resurrection morning that the grave couldn’t hold him. HE IS RISEN!

Let’s watch the clip and then we’ll pray & you will be served.

**Media Clip – Scars (3 mins)**

**Let’s pray …**

_Loving and Mighty Father God,
The immensity of the cross is overpowering. It stuns us that the creator of the universe would send His only Son so that I might go free from the burdens & life-destroying distress of my actions. Your love through the cross overpowers us. Your love at the empty tomb re-constructs us. We thank you for being our High Priest and for providing a way to salvation._

_May we live the resurrected life that has been so freely provided. May we walk in the light of the Lord and never be afraid of the darkness again. We thank you for the Bread – the Body of Christ, and the cup, a symbol of his precious blood._

_Thank you for Easter – it is Good News. May our broken world hear this Good News before it is too late. Your coming is imminent. Keep us ever ready and ever watchful. May your name be blessed for ever. In the risen name of Christ our Saviour. Amen_

Let’s worship Jesus as we now sing our final song and as we leave in the Hope & Joy of the Resurrection of God’s Son. As we sing it, may it ring out to our community so that they will hear the Good news of Jesus. The best is yet to come!

**Closing Song ~ There is a Redeemer**

**Closing Prayer**

_Loving God,
Father, we thank you for the beauty of Easter._

_We thank you that the deepest questions of life are answered with the simplicity of an empty tomb._

_Lead us into the garden of the Resurrection where we may meet our Lord._
May we never live again as if Jesus were dead.  
May those who doubt … now believe and find life through his name.  
May those who understand their condition … now understand that victory and forgiveness are found through our wonderful Saviour Jesus.  
Let the words ‘It is finished’ ring so strongly in our spirits.  

Thank you that the best in still yet to come … the grave has no power anymore … there is Good News from the Graveyard because of Jesus.  

We thank you for Easter Sunday and the power of the empty tomb for each man, woman & child.  May we peer in this morning & hear the angels say, ‘Why are you looking for the living among the dead?’  He is risen.  
Yes, thank God almighty, He has risen indeed.  

In the name of Jesus our Saviour who died and rose again,  
And who lives forevermore.  
Amen.

Jesus Has Risen

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.