

## John 20:1-19 – A different kind of hope

Do you ever watch a drama on TV that starts with an intense scene - a death, a murder, some major event.

And then the story pans out – you read on the screen 5 years earlier – and start to discover the backdrop to what you have just watched.

That's what we will do this morning.

20:1 Early on the first day of the week, **while it was still dark**, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb....

20:11: Mary stands outside the tomb crying. Weeping.  
There is deep grief and sorrow here in the darkness.

As N.T.Wright writes:

“Stand with her as she weeps. Think of someone you know, or have seen on television or in the newspapers, who has cried bitterly this week. Bring them too and stand there with Mary. Don't rush it. Tears have their own natural rhythm. Hold them – the people, the tears – in your mind as you stand outside the tomb.”

What I feel is a sense of **hopelessness**. A sense of **darkness**. The cold chill. The sorrow.

Have you ever felt that creeping over you?

A sense of loss and bereavement as you look at the tomb.

A creeping fear of sickness or death.

A feeling that nothing is going to change.

That all is dark.

A sense of hopelessness.

This is where Mary is...

And Mary, standing in the darkness, is representative of all of us.

This is the dramatic opening scene.

Now let's start to zoom out from this story to a wider backdrop.

### Road to Emmaus

Discussing Jesus. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but **we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel**. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body.

Luke 24:19-23

As Tom Wright writes in Surprised by Hope:

"When Jesus was crucified, every single disciple knew what it meant: we backed the wrong horse. The game is over. Whatever their expectations, and however Jesus had been trying to redefine those expectations, as far as they were concerned, **hope had crumbled into ashes.**"

Mary is representative of these and all of those who are waiting for the **Messianic Hope**.

People walking in darkness ...

“In the darkness we were waiting

**Without hope**, without light”

Paul “**without God and without hope**”

### **What is this Messianic hope?**

Messiah – Hebrew

Christ -Greek

Anointed One

A King – A saviour – A redeemer

Adam and Eve

Genesis 3

God’s pronouncement that an offspring of the woman will overcome the serpent marks the beginning of what will become the Messianic hope...

Abraham

David – A David King – One from David's line – To save and redeem the people of Israel

A promised salvation – A hope...

So many false dawns and moments when all hope seemed to be extinguished...

Israel faltered. Nations overcame them. Their prophets spoke out...Of one that would come. A servant. A child. A King. A redeemer.

Light in the darkness...

"I will also make you a **light** for the Gentiles, that my **salvation** may reach to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

And then Jesus is born – and taken by his parents to the temple.

### Simeon and Anna

Luke 2:25-32 "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel (the Messianic hope), and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before **he had seen the Lord's Messiah**. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. **For my eyes have seen your salvation**, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: **a light** for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

### Anna the prophetess

Luke 2:38 "Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to **all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.**"

This is what the men walking on the road to Emmaus were talking about...

## Emmaus

Luke 24:21 – “**we had hoped** that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel...”

In the darkness we were waiting  
Without hope, without light  
'Til from Heaven You came running  
There was mercy in Your eyes  
To fulfill the law and prophets  
To a virgin came the word  
From a throne of endless glory  
To a cradle in the dirt

Now let's zoom back in to that first resurrection Sunday....

Against the backdrop of a people waiting for a saviour, a Davidic King, a redeemer – the Messiah...

Mary and the disciples with her are still in **darkness**....

When I read the passage there are things that stand out to me...

The sense of **loss**.

The sense of **confusion**...

2: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we **don't know** where they have put him.”

9: “They still **did not understand** from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.”

## Hesitation

As John runs up to the empty tomb, he looks, but he doesn't go in...

5: "He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but **did not go in.**"

### **Hopelessness and despair**

11: "Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she **wept**, she bent over to look into the tomb"

Mary stoops and she looks into the tomb and there, through the tears, she sees two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13: They asked her, "Woman why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and **I don't know** where they have put him."

The angels know something that Mary does not yet know.

The angels have seen something that she has not yet seen.

### **A different kind of hope.**

The hope of resurrection.

She is still in a place of tears and weeping and darkness and confusion.

The angels are already celebrating an empty tomb and a risen Christ...

### **A different kind of hope**

What Mary and the disciples did not know as this day dawned, as they walked through the grief and the sorrow after another sleepless night, was that this would be the day of the resurrection.

This would be their resurrection day.

This would be the fulfilment of the Messianic Hope.

As you stand with Mary by the tomb – and hear her weeping and identify with her sorrow – you are looking at someone who is about to encounter the risen Christ.

This is resurrection day.

And the resurrection changes everything...

14-16:

Jesus says to her: “**Mary**” (Hebrew/Aramaic – Mariam). The resurrected Christ – all-powerful and all-glorious – encounters and comforts this weeping and heartbroken woman.

He calls her by name.

He calls you by name.

And she **turns and she responds** “Rabboni” which means “My teacher”.

FDB – “A second before this turn there is a woman in the deepest human despair in the agonizing presence of unconquerable death; a second after the beginning of this turn there is a woman in the deepest possible human elation – in the presence of the death-conquering Central Figure of history.”

This is resurrection day.

And the resurrection changes everything.

As N.T.Wright says:

“Something has altered. A new relationship has sprung to life like a sudden spring flower. The disciples are welcomed into a new

world: a world where they can know God the way Jesus knew God, where they can be intimate children with their father.”

Rend Collective – This is My Resurrection Day

Because You're risen I can rise/Because You're living I'm alive

Because Your cross is powerful/Because You rose invincible

I can get up off the floor/This is my resurrection day

18: Mary went to the disciples with the news: **“I have seen the Lord!”**

The apostle Paul, who also had a personal encounter with the risen Jesus, wrote in one of his letters:

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so **in Christ all will be made alive.**” (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

This is your resurrection day.....

Jesus is calling your name....

To reveal the kingdom coming

And to reconcile the lost

To redeem the whole creation

You did not despise the cross

For even in your suffering

You saw to the other side



Knowing this was our salvation  
Jesus for our sake you died

And the morning that You rose  
All of Heaven held its breath  
'Til that stone was moved for good  
For the Lamb had conquered death  
And the dead rose from their tombs  
And the angels stood in awe  
For the souls of all who'd come  
To the Father are restored

By His blood and in His name  
In His freedom I am free  
For the love of Jesus Christ  
Who has resurrected me

### **Alpha video – Leyton's story**

Jesus says of himself:

**"I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!"**

Easter is all about the power of resurrection. Of life after and beyond death. Of hope and new life.

It is a celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection and his offer of new life for us all. Jesus said: **"I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."**

I think people are still in darkness. Still confused. Still not knowing. Still searching.

Easter is the perfect time to look beyond this current crisis and to believe in a different kind of hope - the power of the resurrection!

“During a dark time for most of the world, and for me personally, as we all long and grasp for hope, there is no better place to look than the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” Tim Keller -Hope in Times of Fear

John 20:15

“Who is it you are looking for?”

People are looking for hope and meaning.

A different kind of hope

Madeline Grant – The strange rebirth of Christian England (Telegraph)

Easter is a time for hope. Normally, that hope is a solely theological one. However this year, the pollsters have joined in the message of Resurrection with some cold, hard data.

Far from being dead, extensive polling by the Bible Society suggests that Christianity is experiencing the beginnings of a quiet revival, especially among younger worshippers. Sixteen per cent of 18-24-year olds say they are monthly churchgoers, up from 4 per cent in 2018.

At the root of much of this failure (of the established church) is the idea that the Church needs to be more like the world around it, whereas what these findings suggest is that young people are crying out for, if anything, an escape from the world; hence

Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism's greater success among younger age groups.

I know, because it worked for me. After months of being scared witless during the pandemic, I attended an Easter Sunday service at St Bartholomew-the-Great in Smithfield. Listening to beautiful music, connecting with people – albeit from afar – and, crucially, receiving **a message of hope**, was the exact opposite of what the world was then offering. It was precisely the strangeness that made me want to return. And in this world, there is nothing stranger to young people than the claim, so different to that of radical Left and Right, that **they are known and loved by a God who is beyond the human or political and yet whom they can encounter at their local church.**

One of the actors at this garden resurrection scene – Peter – later wrote these words in one of his letters:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3)

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” (Hebrews 6:19)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)