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| Jeremiah 31:1-6John 20:10-18 | Easter Sunday - Voice of Celebration | Pinelands – 9am – 09/04/2023Thornton – 10:30am – 09/04/2023 |

We began this week on Palm Sunday with the sermon title…

 ***Voice of Hope***

And today… Easter Sunday the Sermon Title is ***Voice of Celebration***

**Mary Magdalene had every reason to** **CELEBRATE…**

She owed her present reality to **Jesus…**

 Tradition claims she was a prostitute… but no evidence

of this is found in the gospels

 **Jesus** had freed her from 7 demons

 He set her free and turned her brokenness into wholeness

**Remember…**

**Mary** had been present at the crucifixion of Jesus,

She was Witness to his suffering and death…

 **the events** had, no doubt, shaken her…

 maybe more… than Earthquake had shaken the city.

That was **Friday…** **BUT…** this was **Sunday.**
She had **returned to the tomb** on the first day of the week…

***Picture it…***

early in the morning the crispness of night still in the air,

the events of the last few days *still raw and painful,*

the path beneath her feet,

the early morning bird song,

the first colours appearing on the blooms

as the light broke through…

**There in that garden of the dead.**

There was the tomb… **BUT…** the stone had been rolled away…

she realised that Jesus’ body was not there.

***Where was His body?...***

the lifeless broken frame she had come to attend?

**Then surprise…** encountering the **angels…**

one at the head and one at the feet of where Jesus lay.

***His body was gone!
Where had his body gone?***

**Then another Surprise…** Encountering the **‘Gardener’**

 To Mary’s amazement… it is **Jesus…**

**Her Jesus…**

***The Risen Lord.***

**Mary Magdalene…**

 *A follower of Jesus, Set free by Jesus…*

**And now…** the **first person** *to see the* ***Risen Saviour***

 And the **first person** to ***share that good news.***

**Despite** ***the Cross on Friday…***

 **Mary** had every reason to celebrate

 The Tomb was empty…

 **NOT ONLY EMPTY…** but she had seen the risen Saviour

**BUT… Notice…**

 **At first** **Mary** ***does not recognise Her Lord…***

 …She mistakens him for the gardener

***What prevents her from recognising Jesus?***

 Her *grief…* from Friday / death

Her *disbelief…* the impossible / how can this be?

 Her *preoccupation…* where is the body?

**Today…** we readily celebrate Jesus…

 Come to church, when we can / have to.

 Acknowledge Him, when we need Him.

 As long as it is not

too inconvenient.

**How is it that we too take** **so long to recognise the Saviour?**

***Are we distracted by the events of life?...***

***Are we shaken by our pasts?...***

***Are our eyes clouded, full of tears?...***

**WHAT PREVENTS US FROM RECOGNIZING JESUS?**

**Our Busyness** - *work, home life, activities…*

 **Seriously…** do we make time for Jesus…

 ***Or…*** does he get ***squeezed out***

**Our Prejudice -** *we know what we know and believe what we believe*

**Seriously…** are we open to Jesus teaching us

NEW things

***OR…*** are we **that stubborn** and arrogant

**Our Culture** - *Is it the done thing…*

 *Socially acceptable…*

 We fear what others think.

 **Seriously…**do we include Jesus in our lives

 ***OR…*** Do we ***shift Him*** to the side

**Our History** - *Experiences of the past.*

 Experiences of Church and Faith.

 **Seriously…** do we learn from our pasts

 ***OR…*** Do we keep ***blaming God***

We will only celebrate **Jesus** as much as we know Him…

 The better we Know our Lord…

 **The more we will celebrate** **Him.**

**SO…** How well **do you** know your Lord?

 How well **do you** know Jesus?

**Seriously…**

 How intimately is **Jesus** involved in your life?

 How much do you involve **Jesus** in your life?

 ***Do we take Jesus for Granted?***

May I remind you… Jesus has Proved his love for you.

He has **DEMONSTRATED His LOVE** for you…

 In His *BIRTH, LIFE, DEATH* and *RESURRECTION*

Jesus continues to **DEMONSTRATE His love for you…**

 In the… **Gift** of Community

 **Privilege** of Worship

 **Reality** of God’s GRACE

 **Treasure** of Relationship

 **Evidence** of GIFTS and TALENTS

 **Witness** of other Believers

**There is MUCH to** **CELEBRATE**

**Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin…**

Was a Russian Communist leader…

He took part in the Bolshevik Revolution 1917…

Was **editor** of the Soviet newspaper ‘Pravda’…

Was well educated in economics and political science…

And was also a staunch confessed Athiest.

**In 1930** he addressed a huge crowd… for over an hour…

he *slated Christianity with insults,*

*proof and argument.*

Afterwards he asked if there were any questions…

A Deafening silence filled the auditorium…

One man approached the platform

and mounted the lectern…

standing near the communist leader.

He surveyed the crowd first to the **left** then to the **right.**

Finally he shouted… **"CHRIST IS RISEN!"**
**En masse** the crowd arose as one voice…

and the response came crashing like the sound of thunder:

**"HE IS RISEN INDEED!"**

Today we **CELEBRATE THAT SAME LORD…**

**For…** Jesus who was *Mocked / Beaten*

Jesus who was *Crucified…*

 Jesus who was *Buried…*

 Is now *Alive…*

 **He is Risen… He is risen indeed!!**

**We Celebrate our RISEN LORD….**

With a voice of celebration we sing…

 **“Thine be the Glory, Risen conquering Son”**

**Jeremiah 31:1-6 Israel's Return Home**

The Lord says, “The time is coming when I will be the God of all the tribes of Israel, and they will be my people. In the desert I showed mercy to those people who had escaped death. When the people of Israel longed for rest, I appeared to them from far away. People of Israel, I have always loved you, so I continue to show you my constant love. Once again I will rebuild you. Once again you will take up your tambourines and dance joyfully. Once again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria, and those who plant them will eat what the vineyards produce. Yes, the time is coming when sentries will call out on the hills of Ephraim, ‘Let's go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.’”

**John 20:1-18 The Empty Tomb**

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!”

Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth which had been around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) Then the disciples went back home.

**Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. “Woman, why are you crying?” they asked her.

She answered, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!”

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. “Woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who is it that you are looking for?”

She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, “If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (This means “Teacher.”)

“Do not hold on to me,” Jesus told her, “because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God.”

So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.