

EASTER 2018

**John 20:1-9**

**Guess what happened to me?**

Have you ever been to a football match? What was the best bit? Who scored the goal? Did you cheer? Did your team win?

Have you ever been to a music concert? What was your favourite song? Who went with you? What was your best memory?

Have you ever been to a birthday party? Whose birthday was it? What games did you play? What is your favourite birthday party food? Was there a cake and candles?

Was it exciting to be at these special events?

Easter a very special event and especially for some of the people who were there and saw it for the first time. John was there – three times we read about “the other disciple”: Mary came running to him and Peter; Peter and the other disciple started running to the tomb; the other disciple was faster and got there first; “the other disciple” was John. He was there and for John and the others it was all very exciting later, but at first they were totally confused.

They were confused by the fact that the tomb is empty! This is the one thing they can't really understand, but it is a fact that they have to try to understand. The tomb is empty. They are at the right cave because they watched their friends put Jesus' body there on Friday night; so they are in the right place; there is no other tomb and maybe they got it wrong. The tomb is empty!

The tomb is empty! What happened next? Well, two things happened:

1. An angel appeared to tell the women that God has raised Jesus; He is alive.
2. The same women came back saying “We've seen the Lord!”

What did John make of all that? Is he still confused? Yes, but something else was happening; he was beginning to be excited because he remembered what Jesus said, that He would die and on the third day be raised; it was happening just as Jesus said! It got so exciting later that they all began talking about it and telling other people about it – Jesus is alive; we've seen the Lord!

Easter is exciting because it tells us that Jesus is alive, that the same Jesus who died on the cross is alive for ever and is our Saviour for ever. There are lots of things we don't understand, especially how it could happen; but it is exciting to be able to tell the world that Easter is the good news that Jesus is alive; the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive.

**John 20:9-18**

**I have seen the Lord**

What's happened here? Something has changed – what is it? What did you see?

Tell me what has changed? *I have taken off my dog collar; I have moved the pulpit fall; I have hidden an Easter egg in the font!*

When did it happen?

What else did you see me do? Where did I put these things?

We all see different things; some of you saw me take off my dog collar; some of you think you saw me put it in my pocket, but was it my right pocket or left? In fact, it was the right-hand pocket! Some of you saw me move pulpit fall and saw that I had hidden it behind the communion table; some of you didn't notice anything because you were too busy singing! If you go out from church today to tell your friends that something strange happened, most of you have to rely on what other people saw; and if two of you tell same person, that person will get two slightly different versions of the same story.

"I have seen the Lord!" Mary told Jesus' disciples that she had seen Jesus. I'm not sure that many of them believed her at first, but she had seen Jesus. She wasn't sure it was Him to start with; she thought it might have been the gardener, but then maybe it wasn't quite daylight; maybe her eyes were clouded with tears; someone suggested she was bending down to see inside tomb and only saw his legs! She saw Jesus; she was sure. "I have seen the Lord!" Because of this witness and others we know that it took place at the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea on the first day of the week after Passover in the year AD33.

Later the other disciples also saw Jesus; they met Him in a locked room; they met Him as they walked home at the end of the day; later they met Him on the beach and had breakfast together and they could tell the world later "we have seen the Lord!" Because of their witness, they began to tell the world the good news about Jesus; "this is what we have seen; we are witnesses..." We tell the world what these witnesses saw because they were there. For our world we are the witnesses: we don't know everything but we know Jesus, He lives in us and He has changed our lives.

### **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

#### **Fool? Fake? True!**

Happy Christmas? The Nativity set is out! Here's a picture of spaghetti trees! Does Spaghetti grow on trees? A long time ago, a BBC programme showed pictures like the one on the screen, pictures of the spaghetti harvest, showing spaghetti growing on trees and ready to be picked by the farmers. Or did you meet the Lirpa Loof – a strange animal who appeared on another BBC programme called *That's Life* and they said it had just appeared at London Zoo from the Himalayas; it's poo was purple because of eating lots of purple flowers and it could mimic, copying what people did. This is April 1<sup>st</sup> – April Fools' Day, day when we play tricks on others: if someone is scared of spiders you might pretend that there's a spider crawling down their back, but it is just a trick! These two stories were shown on TV on April 1<sup>st</sup> and people began to realise – spaghetti doesn't grow on trees and so the TV programme was playing a joke; everyone knows that spaghetti comes from Tesco; if you read Lirpa Loof backwards what do you get? April Fool! In my newspaper today there is a story about pandas, but the clue in the name, Li Lapfoor, the Chinese scientist supposedly involved in the story.

We have fake News! I saw this picture a few weeks ago when all the snow was on the ground here and this picture appeared and there were others to tell the world that it was snowing in Egypt and that the pyramids and the Sphinx were covered in snow. Egypt is a hot country and it can snow there but not for a long time and not in 2018! These pictures were made up to look as if it had been snowing on the pyramids but they were fake! The US President is quick to claim that news stories are fake, especially if he doesn't like them; we're not sure what is true anymore.

Is the Easter story an April Fool's joke or fake news? Or is it true? Some people don't like it because they can't understand it; they say, "things like that just can't happen!" and so they won't believe that Jesus was raised. Others say that Jesus' friends made up the story to make themselves feel good! But there is so much about the story that leads us to think that it's true. We have seen John get excited about the empty tomb and meeting Jesus alive, telling the world what he saw. We have seen the women also tell the world that Jesus is alive, telling the world what they saw; and then Paul gives us a great long list of people who have seen Jesus alive, so many witnesses; the church is living for this new faith and is willing to suffer so much for what they believe about Jesus; surely this is a true story. Anyway, the tomb is empty and there is no other explanation! Jesus is alive.

This is a true story that changes people's lives. Mary was sad and afraid before she met Jesus, but afterwards she was full of joy and her life was changed. People have discovered that ever since the first Easter; our lives have been changed by Jesus' power at work in us: people who have been afraid have overcome their fears; some who have sense of failure have had their

sins forgiven; people whose lives have been full of sadness and sorrow have found great joy in knowing Jesus. This is not just true for Mary, but the story is for everyone and we are called by Jesus to tell others this story. Let our lives be changed by knowing that Jesus is alive; let other lives be changed by knowing that Jesus is alive; how will they know unless we tell them?

“Hope is here” – that’s what our cards say. Hope comes from Jesus at Easter, from Jesus who was crucified, died and then raised by God’s power to live forever. Because He lives we have hope, the hope of grace from God, the hope of forgiveness – “He died that we might be forgiven” - , the hope of peace, the hope of heaven and glory to share with Jesus; the hope that Jesus is with us always, even in the dark places that we visit in our lives. Because He lives this hope is ours, for Mary, for John, for us, for our world.