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**Sunday 9 April 2023 to Sunday 16 April 2023**

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Sunday 9 April 2023

**He is risen!**

by Faye Schmidt

***Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him’ (Matthew 28:7).***

Read [Matthew 28:1–10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NRSVUE)

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visited the tomb of Jesus that morning, they would not have expected to experience a violent earthquake, encounter an angel or find the tomb empty.

This would have been a lot to take in, and it is no wonder the angel told them not to be afraid – they would have been feeling fear from a number of different angles and for various reasons. We read that the guards, too, most likely strong and hardened men, ‘shook and became like dead men’. Who can blame anyone for being afraid in such circumstances?

But the biggest fear they would have experienced was the unknown – where was Jesus? What has happened to him?

The words of the angel, ‘He is risen’, filled them with joy as they hurried away to carry out the task the angel had given them. They hurried. This news could not wait. The news of an earthquake and an angel faded away in the light of this momentous message, and it was imperative that it be shared as a matter of urgency.

We, too, face the empty tomb of Jesus with fear and awe as we recognise what his resurrection means for us. Our sorrow at his death on the cross is overcome with the joy of his victory over death – for us, each one of us. On hearing this news, who do I now hurry to tell just as the women did that morning?

***Dear Lord, send your Holy Spirit to equip me to be ready to share the joy of Jesus’ resurrection with those who have not heard or do not believe so that they, too, may share in the joy of the gift of salvation and eternal life through him. Amen.***

*Faye Schmidt continues her diaconal calling through governance, having served on the Victoria–Tasmania District Church Board, the General Church Board and currently as chair of the Standing Committee on Constitutions and her congregation, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide. Having lived and worked in many locations within Australia and overseas, Faye has a heart for the stranger and the newcomer. She has a heart for being open to new ideas, learning from others and responding to needs.*

Monday 10 April 2023

**God’s final Word: his Son**

by Faye Schmidt

***In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1,2b)***

Read [Hebrews 1:1–14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%9314&version=NRSVUE)

The writer to the Hebrews meets the readers of his letter at a place familiar to them – the prophets. They know the prophets and the messages from God brought to them over many generations. These messages were varied and spoken to the people in many circumstances but with a focus on the One who was to come – the suffering servant.

We know now that God’s final word to us is in the life, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus. Jesus is the culmination of all the prophecies and the one who is the Word, the embodiment of all God wishes to convey to us, of his love for us.

There is no need for us to look for ways to learn about God and his will for us apart from the Scriptures. With the death and resurrection of Jesus, the act of full reconciliation of us with God was made complete – final. Jesus himself said on the cross, ‘It is finished’. He knew that the law was fulfilled – the promise kept.

Many may come and say that they speak for God. But unless they point to Jesus as the Son of God and the final Word from God, we should be wary. God has made it clear that as Jesus was there from creation and is his dear Son, he has authority over all, including all the angels.

Look to Jesus. In Jesus' life and words, you will find God’s love for you.

***Dear Jesus, help me to dwell in your word so that I may grow in faith and worship and praise you as your word is truth. Amen.***

Tuesday 11 April 2023

**We see Jesus**

by Faye Schmidt

***But we do see Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9).***

Read [Hebrews 2:1–10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+2%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NRSVUE)

There are many instances in the gospels where we read that ‘Jesus saw …’. It may be the blind man at the gate or the woman who stooped over, seeing only the ground for 18 years. It is one of the wonders of Jesus that he was aware of what was before him and ‘saw’ before being approached or asked.

But references to ‘see’ in Scripture can also often mean to understand or realise or know. To see may not always refer to physical sight but insight.

In our text today, the writer says, ‘we do see Jesus’. Really? Where and how do we ‘see’ him? If we claim to have seen Jesus, we may be referred to a mental health specialist. But the writer is sure – we do see.

So, see him we can. We see him in the Scriptures. He said of himself, ‘Whoever sees me has seen the Father who sent me’. We are meant to see Jesus. We are meant to know who he is, understand why he came to be less than the angels among us for a time and realise that his death was for everyone, including you and me.

We also see Jesus in others. Matthew 25:37,40 says:

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’

‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

So we also see Jesus in those around us that we meet and serve. Are we aware that it is Jesus we see before us? Or do we just see the person with their need?

**Dear Jesus, please send your Holy Spirit so that my eyes may be open to see you in your word and my neighbour. Amen.**

Wednesday 12 April 2023

**The humanity of Jesus**

by Faye Schmidt

***For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way ... that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17).***

Read [Hebrews 2:11–18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+2%3A11%E2%80%9318&version=NRSVUE)

I wonder what kind of god you would create if you were invited to participate in a working group to develop a new religion. Would it be a remote being, untainted by the things that impact our lives? Would it be a god that we can place on a shelf and just bring into our consciousness as and when it suits us?

For many people coming to Christianity, one of the hardest facts to accept is that Jesus is both God and man. ‘Fully human in every way’, the writer of Hebrews says. There was no aspect of humanity that he did not experience. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus was born of a woman, slept, ate, wept, was tempted, experienced joy, had friends, felt grief, suffered pain – and died.

It is at the cross that we confront both the humanity and the godhead of Jesus. It is as a man he hangs on the cross, bleeding, body twisted in pain, crying out in anguish. But this man is also our God. With the words ‘it is finished’, Jesus affirms that he is God.

We go through our lives wondering about our purpose, whether we have achieved anything or made any mark. What really is the meaning of our life, we wonder?

Only God can know that the plan from creation for our salvation has been finished. On the cross, Jesus is the high priest in sacrificial service to God, atoning for our sins. From the beginning, he knew the purpose for which he came among us.

We should never shirk from bringing any aspect of our lives to God. This is the privilege we have through Jesus as he intercedes for us and brings us peace.

***Thank you, Heavenly Father, for sending your Son as atonement for our sins. Send your Holy Spirit so that I may live my life with the confidence and assurance that my purpose is to worship, praise and serve you in thanksgiving. Amen.***

Thursday 13 April 2023

**Am I open or closed?**

by Faye Schmidt

***So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts’
(Hebrews 3:7,8a).***

Read [Hebrews 3:1–11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+3%3A1%E2%80%9311&version=NRSVUE)

‘Don’t tell me; I just don’t want to hear it!’ How often have we heard this said to us, or have we ourselves said it? The minute someone wants to tell us something important to them, we often want to shy away, and run as far as we can, because once we hear it, we cannot undo it, and it may impact and change us.

Such knowledge may require us to get involved, help out and give some of our time on activities we hadn’t planned. Or to contribute some money to a cause unknown to us.

When God speaks to us, the temptation to block out his voice can be strong. Knowing about God and his plan for my salvation is one thing, but actually having to ‘hear his voice’ speaking directly to me, engaging with me and requiring something of me is a different matter.

When we speak of our hearts, we speak of what we love. We love from the heart. To ‘harden your heart’ is to deny and reject love.

God wants to come into our being so that we may ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’. There is much he wants to tell us about his plan for our lives and eternity with him.

When we hear his voice, it is an invitation. The wonder is that God doesn’t stop loving us even though we harden ourselves against such love. Because accepting God’s love and grace requires us to respond – to give thanks, serve, worship and have a relationship with him through word and sacrament.

So, the next time you hear his voice – let him in.

***Dear Lord, send your Holy Spirit to me so that I may receive you with joy and thanksgiving as you lead me to know Christ, my Saviour. Amen.***

Friday 14 April 2023

**Encouragement**

by Faye Schmidt

***But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:13).***

Read [Hebrews 3:12–19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+3%3A12%E2%80%9319&version=NIV)

The crossword clue is often ‘urge’ or ‘egg on’, and the solution: ‘encourage’. The most frequent use of encouraging words seems to be in the sporting world – even down to the Aussie word ‘barracking’. However, when cheering for our favourite football team, the outcome of the game is what matters, not any outcome of the individual players – it is not personal.

Under Christ, it is different. The phrase ‘encourage one another’ is used frequently in the epistles. Encouraging one another in our faith is an integral part of the Christian life. It emphasises that we are part of a community. Encouragement is not something one can do for oneself – it is done with and for another.

To struggle with our faith is normal. There are times when we want to cry out, ‘Lord, if some are gifted with faith that can move mountains, why do I have the faith of the mustard seed?’ And at other times, we also identify with the man who said to Jesus, ‘Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief’.

Therefore, it should be natural for us to be aware that everyone needs to hear words of encouragement from us at some time. Because we cannot see into the hearts and minds of our family and neighbours, we don’t need to know of any particular concern or event that warrants such encouragement. It is never wasted.

It is through encouragement that we build each other up in the faith, and thus build up the church.

‘May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Romans 15:5,6).

***Dear Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit to awaken me to be aware of when I can serve you by being a source of encouragement to a sister or brother in their faith. Amen.***

Saturday 15 April 2023

**Security**

by Faye Schmidt

***My body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your holy one see decay (Psalm 16:9b,10).***

Read [Psalm 16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16+&version=NRSVUE)

What a statement from the psalmist! Such confidence. Such assurance. And it all rests with the final words, ‘for you will not let your holy one see decay’ – a prophecy of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus’ body will not decay. When the women went to the tomb, it wasn’t even there. It wasn’t what they expected because they came prepared to provide oil and ointments to address a decaying body.

When we think of ‘security’, it is often in the sense of protection. Matters of international importance are often referred to as a matter of national security. Something needs protecting.

Or we think of security guards. They are seen in many places these days, such as banks, government buildings, nightclubs and factories. In some countries, security guards are also present at schools.

The intent is to protect people from harm or property from damage.

The recent earthquake in Türkiye and Syria reminds us, once again, that when we go to bed at night, our earthly world is not one of security and rest. In the stealth of night, with terror, death came to thousands of people. The childhood prayer came to mind at this time: ‘Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.’

Our text tells us that our bodies will ‘rest secure’. Not because it is guarded or protected by others, but because Jesus’ death and resurrection mean we also will have the joy of eternal life through God’s gift of faith through grace.

We don’t have to be concerned – we can rest secure. Held tight. Nothing can come between us and God.

***Dear Jesus, I thank and praise you that through you, my eternal rest is secure in your promises, love and sacrifice. Amen.***

Sunday 16 April 2023

**True worship**

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ (John 20:28)**

Read [John 20:19–31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A19%E2%80%9331&version=NRSVUE)

I feel that Thomas often gets a bit unfairly treated by many readers of today’s passage. If we are honest with ourselves, many (if not most) of us would act no differently to Thomas in that position. Remember that people who are dead and buried do not then appear a couple of days later in the middle of the room. Plus, we all know how grief and despair can affect people. While Thomas probably accepted the common belief that God would resurrect the faithful – at the end of the current age – the temple was still standing, the corrupt religious leaders were still in place, and Rome still ruled. It very much seemed as though the current age was unchanged.

Besides, none of Jesus’ followers expected that following that horrendous death on the cross, Jesus would be walking around with them just days later!

However, when Thomas placed his eyes on the risen Jesus, all his scepticism disappeared. Notice what he then does. He makes one of the climactic proclamations of this gospel. One question that all the gospels want us to ask is, ‘Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?’ On Thomas’ lips, we have the answer that John’s Gospel has been arguing for from the prologue onwards: He is our Lord and our God.

We need to turn our eyes towards Jesus. We need to keep coming back to the cross. For, like Thomas, that is where we will find true worship. When we struggle to worship or find it difficult to pray or read the Scriptures, we need to come back to Jesus – hear his life, death and resurrection proclaimed again. This is one story we can never hear too often. Why not read chapters 1 and then 19 and 20 of the Gospel of John today – and focus on Jesus?

***God of Salvation, thank you for sending your dear Son to our sinful world so that he may live the life that I fail to, suffer my punishment for me, and bring me into your family. Forgive me when my questions cause me to doubt him. Through your Holy Spirit, keep me focused on my Lord Jesus each and every day. In his name, I pray. Amen.***

*Glenn Crouch was born in Brisbane, baptised in the Methodist Church, and married Karen in a Reformed Baptist Church. They moved to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia 37 years ago, where Glenn worked as a lecturer in computing. After serving as a Baptist pastor, Glenn joined the Lutheran Church with Karen in 1995. Glenn served as a lay preacher, which led to him becoming a Specific Ministry Pastor, and then a General Ministry Pastor. Recently Glenn and Karen have bundled everything up and moved to Esperance, Western Australia, where Glenn has his first full-time paid ministry role as pastor of St John’s in Esperance and St Paul’s in Kalgoorlie–Boulder.*