

Then the women remembered

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on Easter Sunday, April 17th, 12022 – Luke 24:1-12)

It must have been just so perplexing for the women – Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others – watching a friend give up Jesus for a few silver coins, then another denying he had ever known Jesus, not once but three times. Then most of them fleeing. Then the sham trial and sentencing and most horrifically standing not too far off after they nailed him to a cross and breathing his last. Did they hear both the criminal and centurion when they realized that Jesus was indeed all he said he was – the Son of God, the Messiah.

So, they did the only thing they knew they could do and spent the day getting spices ready to take to the grave. They had the foresight to follow and see where Joseph had the body taken, so they knew where to go to.

Under the cover of darkness, at the crack of dawn they make their way to the tomb, grief stricken, sad, disillusioned and maybe still a bit angry.

Upon their arrival at the tomb more perplexing events, the stone which they had seen being rolled in front of the tomb only days earlier and which they had worried about being able to move, has already been rolled away. They enter, no doubt with trepidation and find the tomb empty. And it gets progressively worse, two men appear from out of nowhere and what's more they say cryptically a couple of things – why look for the living amongst the dead, did they not know they had watched the crucifixion and burial with their own eyes. Then they say – he is not here, well of course that is bleedin' obvious. More cryptically they say – He is risen, remember.

And so, they began to remember. They remembered the many times that Jesus had told them that life would get difficult for him, that some would be so upset with him they would seek to silence him once and for all, that he would be crucified. That had all happened, but that wasn't all he had said. He had said he would rise again on the third day. The criminal on the cross beside Jesus had asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom, now they were being asked to remember.

Slowly, the penny began to drop, it was about three days now, so they ran off to find the eleven fellows, to find where they were hiding and tell them that it had happened. When they found them, they told them all that had happened that morning, but they were not taken seriously, they couldn't remember. They just didn't believe them, told the women they were speaking nonsense, that grief was getting in the way, that they needed some rest, that they were overly emotional bordering on hysterical. But then Peter began to remember, he'd done a bit of that lately, after the cock crowed, he remembered that Jesus had said he would deny him. Peter began to remember and unbeknown to the others runs to the tomb and finds the scene just as the women had said. Peter began to remember.

The others, well they just wanted to get back to their lives, to put the past three years or so behind them, sure it had been a bit of an adventure but in reality, it all had come to naught, or so they thought.

That first Easter, that first realization of the Resurrection began in the midst of confusion, perplexity, unbelief, but then there is the remembering, re-member, put back together again.

Easter is a time of remembering. As we journeyed through Lent we remembered the stories – water turned into wine, hungry crowds fed and taught on the hillside, a father welcoming home his wayward son, a woman using costly perfume to anoint Jesus, a farcical trial, denial, betrayal, a violent death and then that reality that death never has the last word. It is a time of remembering that God is extravagant, surprising and generous. Remembering that God turns the order of things upside down. Remembering a God who wants life and abundance and joy not violence, injustice and death.

The events of Easter are central to our faith, the crux of our faith.

We are called to remember and live out its tenets. To remember and live God's generosity. To remember and live God's compassion. To remember and live God's justice. To remember and live God's surprises. To remember and live God's inclusion. To remember and live God's peace. To remember and live God's hope.

Then the women remembered, as you leave this place today remember.

Remember God will always proclaim life in the face of death and violence. Remember God is our life and hope and will not be found amongst the dead.

Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.