

## *We watched ...*

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church Easter Sunday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 – Mark 16)

We watched.

We watched and waited.

We watched and wondered about what would happen next.

Truth be known we had been watching for quite some time.

We'd watched the way he taught – clever, sometimes cryptic, a great orator. We watched the way he healed and fed people – providing for their most basic needs. We watched the way he treated people – compassionate to those on the margins, including all people despite their gender or ethnicity. We watched the growing opposition to this little movement that was building. We watched the way the whole thing played out – betrayal and denial, the fleeing (but who could blame them, no doubt they thought they would be next). We watched the sham trial, the backwards and forwards as no one wanted to take responsibility for what they were doing. We watched the violence, the injustice, the mockery and the suffering. We watched the crowd change, from cheering him on to calling for his head. We watched the foreigner Simon, share the burden of carrying the cross for a time. We watched the other foreigner, the Centurion standing at the cross, announcing what we already knew – truly this was the son of God.

We watched and stood close, but not too close.

We watched; we couldn't tear ourselves away despite our breaking hearts. We watched, even though we were scared stiff. Fear like that is paralysing, it was like we couldn't move, but we knew we couldn't leave him either.

We watched Joseph of Arimathea make a stand; despite the ridicule he would get from his mates.

We watched where he laid him.

We watched out as we made our way back to that tomb, looking over our shoulders, hearing every little sound, but we had to do this, one final act of devotion for our friend.

We had watched them roll that heavy stone across the entrance, but now it was gone. We looked around to see who might have done this.

Then we saw that young man, he seemed familiar, hadn't we seen him before? Was he the young man who fled naked from the Garden of Gethsemane just a few nights ago? Encountering Jesus will do that, leaves you exposed a bit.

We watched him carefully, unsure of who he was and why he was there. Had he rolled the stone away? He speaks -asks us why we are there, but he knows we are looking for Jesus. He tells us that Jesus is not here. How could that be? We had watched with our very own eyes exactly where Joseph had laid him, and we had carefully retraced our

steps this morning. Who could have taken him and why? What were they trying to prove? How could they be so cruel? Why the need to play with our minds?

We look into the tomb, the young man is absolutely correct, our dear Jesus is not there. The young man speaks again – we must go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going to Galilee and we all must meet him there. They will think we are out of our minds; they will think this is just the ramblings of some hysterical women.

Back to Galilee, back to where it all began. Why? Surely, we aren't going to do it all over again, what would be the point? There was though, something compelling about this young man, something amazing about him and about his message that makes us turn and go back to Galilee just as he suggests.

We kept silent though, at least initially. We'd seen too much, we'd just lost our dear, dear friend Jesus and we were just trying to make sense of it all.

After three or so years we had watched it all play out, we'd seen too much and couldn't put ourselves through that again. We were afraid but also slightly exhilarated, could there be more to the story? Maybe this is not how it all ends.

He did speak though of rising again after three days, it's only been a couple of days. He suggested that even the very worst that people could do would not hold him back. We had to give it ago, no matter how crazy they thought we were.

History will record that we did go back to Galilee, we did tell the others, Peter and the rest of them. And we did encounter Jesus again, encountered him in a totally new way. And he sent us on a new journey, gave us a new task. Jesus told us to continue to work with him and share the good news of God's love to the whole world. Explain to others that this is what it had all been about, that the very worst and most barbaric act could not kill God's love for the creation, for the whole world. It doesn't really matter what has or hasn't happened, what we have or haven't done, the important news is that God cares for us no matter what, just like Jesus cared for all those he encountered, even those religious folk who seemed to get in his way all the time. No betrayal or denial or fleeing was going to remove us from God's love.

Now we can see the events of Jesus' life and ministry in a whole new light, and know that he calls us to live and love just like he did. We are called to follow him again and again, to go back to a new beginning. To know that death and violence can never have the last word.

Come back to Galilee with us. Amen.