

# Easter Sunday

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12th Apr, 2020

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By the rivers of Babylon! I'm old enough to remember that Boney M song and I bought the single too with my pocket money!

It comes from the first half of the Bible, The old testament. In those ancient days Israel had had its glory days and disaster had struck because they had messed up just too many times. They were conquered by the Babylonians and many people taken into captivity in Babylon.

So Psalm 137 starts like this...

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
when we remembered Zion.

2 There on the poplars  
we hung our harps,

3 for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
they said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'

4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord  
while in a foreign land?

It's a lament. It's a sad song remembering that there would good times. Worse for them their captors wanted them to sing the songs of celebration in the tough times.

We have an affinity with that - if you have Facebook, it keeps popping up memories of good times to remind you what you were doing 5 or 7 years ago - the garden party, the beach day, the Easter egg hunt with the kids when they were tiny, the big family gatherings for Roast Lamb. Normally that's quite cool, but it feels a bit By the rivers of Babylon right now.

If you come to church gatherings at all around Easter there are things that are special that we can't do right now - the symbolism of pinning regrets on a cross to remind that Jesus death on the cross takes away our sin and wipes the slate clean. The joy of gathering today and hugging and crying out He is risen, because we are so happy to know that Jesus rising again means everything has changed,

We can't do that this year. It's the first digital Easter. So we are lamenting and celebrating at the same time.

You can do that - we eat Sweet and sour Chicken - that's bittersweet!

We can walk and chew gum at the same time.

You can text and walk at the same time. Well apart from these people...

But you get the idea

We are in a season of isolation, fear, difficulty, frustration. There are 80 people in the Coronavirus ward in the QEH and 11 in the ICU - so it's serious and they are all ages.

But today we celebrate too! Jesus had taught for 3 years, he'd been put to death by wicked men on Good Friday - innocent but God's plan to die for our guilt. His body had been put in a tomb and the first followers of Jesus scattered fearing for their lives. On the Sunday morning some brave ladies go to the tomb to pay their respects. Let's pick up the story in Marks' Gospel

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe,

and they were alarmed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is a big deal. Jesus has conquered death and sin. He has risen from the dead. Death no longer has its' sting. It's not the end anymore. Jesus is now in heaven sitting at the right hand of the Father praying for you!

I don't know what you are feeling right now

Isolated

Grieving if you have lost a love one

Angry at God if someone was taken from you early through cancer/trauma.

Asking Why?

The fact that Jesus rose again means that God has won, he has triumphed over all that is broken in the world and our lives.

Knowing that, means that Jesus is in with us in the midst of pain and difficulty and in the good times too.

It means that Rev 21:4 is true

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

In this bittersweet Easter, where so much is like being by the rivers of Babylon, there is the sweetness of Jesus' resurrection that wipes away tears, that takes the sting out of death and will eventually mean no more mourning, crying or pain.

We get to taste that now by trusting in Jesus!

Let's pray