

EASTER SUNDAY



Easter Sunday 01/04/18

The Good Life

Bible Reading: John 11:17-44

Big Idea: Jesus came to give his life for us and to give the ‘good life’ to us; eternal life and satisfaction of our deepest desires (hunger and thirst); this full life starts with the empty tomb.

Key Verse: Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die. - John 11:25

Call to Action: Answer Jesus’ question “do you believe this?” with an emphatic yes – that he is the resurrection and the life.

Metaphor: Easter Egg

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Slide 2



This is CONSTANTIN RELIU

...and in January this year Constantin learned that he was DEAD.

...which as you can imagine...took him a little *BY SURPRISE*. And maybe why he looks I dunno, *NON-PLUSSED*.

He's 63 years old... *so certainly not a YOUNG MAN like myself – only in my late 40s* – but he's VERY MUCH ALIVE

...he's been working in Turkey as a cook the last 20 years

...& returned home to Romania ...to discover that his wife had officially REGISTERED HIM AS DEAD.

And the last few weeks he's been living a LEGALISTIC NIGHTMARE trying to prove to authorities that he is alive

...& he faced a MAJOR SETBACK Thursday when the local court ...refused to overturn his death certificate because his request WAS FILED "TOO LATE."

[It's just so hard to prove you're NOT DEAD these days.]

And THE DECISION – the court said – is FINAL.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/world/dead-man-walking-court-rejects-romanians-claim-hes-alive/ar-BBKjQDh>

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"I am a living ghost"

...says Constantin

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“I am officially dead, although I'm alive”

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“I have no income and because I am listed as dead, I can't do anything.”

...y’know... it’s one of the tick boxes on most job application forms. DEAD. NOT DEAD.

...oh dead. You need to be NOT DEAD for this particular occupation...

Poor Constantin is literally a DEAD MAN WALKING

...& we can only hope he finds a way to COME BACK FROM THE DEAD

If only I could relate that to EASTER somehow?

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Actually... on Easter Sunday 2018... I want to suggest to you this:

...I want to suggest that we SHARE A PROBLEM with Constantin

...without Easter, we are *DEAD MEN WALKING*, dead **WOMEN** walking

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I don't know if you've **SUNK YOUR TEETH** into an Easter Egg yet this Easter

...but for hundreds of years Christians have used Easter eggs to symbolise the **EMPTY TOMB** of Jesus

...and empty tomb – without which – we are in court alongside Constantin...

Dead people walking – **WITHOUT HOPE.**

Death **AWAITS** us.

And the decision **IS FINAL.**

We need someone to **SMASH OPEN THE TOMB.**

And here's Jesus – just before what _____ read for us a moment ago

...Jesus says that he came to earth to give you life – to give you life **“TO THE FULL”**

...which I think most of us are chasing – a **FULL** life right? A life that **MEANS** something?

Problem is... **FULL** life, **NOT FULL** life... if they both end in death... **WHAT'S THE POINT?**

...is Jesus just offering a bit more fullness on the way to the grave?

...no... he really means **FULLNESS...**

You heard it – Jesus says this to you:

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

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Slide 10



The one who believes in me **will live**, even though they die.”

An answer for dead people walking

...to somehow carry LIFE in you not death!

...the promise that death DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FINAL.

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VICTORY OVER DEATH!

Wouldn't you like to SINK YOUR TEETH INTO THAT this Easter??

...well... speaking of a dead man walking...

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LAZARUS. [pause]

We first meet Lazarus as a man NOT DOING ANY WALKING at all

...him being DEAD and all that

...not Constantine *PRESUMED* dead

...Lazarus is *DEAD, DEAD.*

...STINKY dead.

...FOUR DAYS dead

But then Jesus steps towards DEATH... steps towards LAZARUS

...and he does TWO remarkable things.



First Jesus WEEPS. [pause]

...SHORTEST verse in the Bible

...and yet so LOADED and full and rich.

In the face of death Jesus weeps.

...in the face of a heart stopped, his heart bleeds.

...we're told twice that he's "deeply moved" – deeply moved and "troubled"

Both Mary and Martha had wondered if he even cared

..."if you'd been here" – WHERE ARE YOU when it matters? Do you CARE?
[have you ever cried that out to God?]

And here's THE ANSWER. Jesus WEEPS. YES, he cares. ABSOLUTELY, he cares.

...but TO BE BLUNT. What good is that NOW?

BUT. JESUS DOES ANOTHER REMARKABLE THING.

...he doesn't JUST *WEEP* over death

...he **RULES** over it. SPEAKS to death! COMMANDS death! BOSSES death!

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"LAZARUS COME OUT!" [pause]

...as one author observes – he had to specify the name "Lazarus"

...‘cause if Jesus speaks into this tomb – to death on mass – there’s going to be quite a crowd

...which there WILL BE one day...but I’m getting ahead of myself...

Here. Dead LAZARUS – WALKS out – as exactly as Jesus commands.

And THERE IT IS! Right?

...resurrection!

...death defeated!

WELL... Not quite!

...with Lazarus ...we see a glimpse of Jesus power over death

...we see a hint of what is up ahead...

...BUT...

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See those **GRAVE CLOTHES** of Lazarus

...all the strips of linen, the cloth around his face?

...he better hang on to them – maybe give ‘em a wash... ‘cause he’s going to need them **AGAIN** one day

A lot of DETAIL about the linen isn’t there?

...has John got a **LAUNDRY** fetish?

...or is he **SETTING US UP** for something even more mind-blowing than Lazarus’ story?

‘cause this isn’t yet RESURRECTION – more a RESUSCITATION

...’cause Lazarus hasn’t really **PUSHED THROUGH** death out the other side into eternity
...he’s just been **PULLED BACK** into this life...to die all over again!

I mean it’s wonderful – imagine being there – the tears turning to JOY... but one day the JOY will again turn to TEARS... UNLESS...

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DEATH IS SMASHED FOREVER.

...if all we have is *LAZARUS'* story

...we don't have an EMPTY tomb

...we have a tomb IN WAITING ... marked for RE-USE

...he'll BE BACK... just a dead man walking

But John's just been setting us up for the real answer

...all through how he tells the story

...as we move from Jesus at Lazarus' tomb... to Jesus at his OWN tomb

...& John delights to describe ANOTHER SET OF LINEN ...graveclothes that will NEVER BE USED AGAIN

Jesus has died. He's been buried in a tomb. As dead as Lazarus. Dead, dead.

...and we have another MARY

...and another STONE... that has been removed from the entrance

Mary tells A COUPLE OF JESUS' DISCIPLES what she saw... and they RACE to the tomb...

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And here's what Simon Peter finds in this tomb.
NOBODY. [pause]

*He saw the **strips of linen** lying there, as well as the **cloth** that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The **cloth** was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.*

A lot of LINEN DETAIL again.

...except that this time no-one is wearing them
...they're laid out as if the dead body is still under them. But it's not.

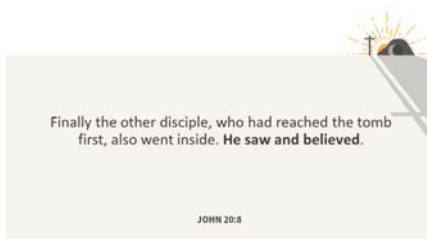
This time the person wearing them TOOK THEM OFF HIMSELF

...this time the graveclothes WON'T BE REQUIRED AGAIN by their owner

...& he won't need a TOMB again either

'cause here's what the other disciple finds in this tomb. NOBODY.

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Which make him BELIEVE.

Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

BELIEVED WHAT??



Believed that Jesus is the RESURRECTION and the LIFE

...believed his promises

...believed what he'd said all along would happen – dies – and rise on the third day. RISE.

...not just resuscitation. RESURRECTION!

...death not just cheated but DEFEATED!

Here is someone who doesn't just get PULLED BACK TO THIS WORLD to die again – a dead man walking.

Here is someone who has pushed through to the OTHER SIDE... though he dies... he lives...

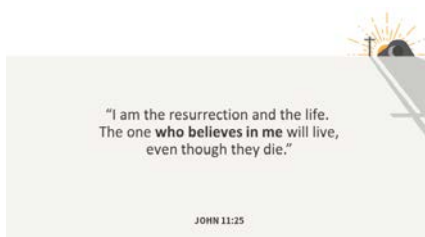
And when these disciples find him – or I should say when he finds THEM

...they meet a living body – Jesus EATS with them... and TALKS with them... before he departs this world to prepare a place for us with him

...you can READ John's story for yourself... and BELIEVE it for yourself

This promise we started with back in John 11 – you can believe it...

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one **who believes in me** will live, even though they die."



"I am the resurrection and the life.
The one **who believes in me** will live,
even though they die."

JOHN 11:25

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“...and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

I find in life I often ask questions of Jesus – of God – of life...

...but here’s Jesus’ own question of us ... a question I have to answer – and so do you:

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE...DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

Y’know John – our author – was that other disciple with Peter – who answers emphatically YES

...and wrote it all down so that we might join him in that yes...

...**I** believe this – and **YOU** should too...

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But these [things] are written that you may believe

*that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that **by believing you may have life** in his name. [pause]*

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Here’s the message of Easter

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Without Jesus, we’re Constantin Reliu

...dead people walking

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But because of Jesus' death and resurrection we can know that death is defeated

...that if we BELIEVE – believe his PROMISES

...death isn't final – not a full stop, just a COMMA

...ETERNAL LIFE stretches out forever beyond the grave

...so we can live FULL lives now – living not in dread but HOPE

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"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

Easter has always been a special time for me since I first believed the gospel

...as a teenager... listening to talks at a camp exactly on the passages we're looking at today

...I am the RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE – I heard it – and believed it – I believed it was true

But y'know...just last Easter...over 30 years later... it sunk in at a deeper level just how precious this promise is.



This is Steve Cree's Dad, Laurie. Dad died last Easter Saturday

...the date was April 15 ...but somehow it will always be EASTER SATURDAY that Steve remembers his Dad in a special way...

...the poignancy of preparing for his Dad's funeral on that day we remember Jesus laying in the tomb, as it were...

You know... in Steve's eulogy at his dad's funeral – he likened him to LAZARUS

...he was an AMAZING man... a STRONG man

- given **MONTHS** to live with Myeloid Dysplasia back in 2010 ...he lived 7 years

- given **DAYS** to live as infections took hold of his body – he fought on for 8 *months*

- Those 8 months were filled with one **LAZARUS moment after another**

The man was an OX!

...Steve says, "I honestly began to think he'd be speaking at *MY* funeral, saying something like...

...*'in the end... Stephen had no **fight**, no **ticker**, no **strength!**'* "

But Steve did speak at his dad's funeral – and thankfully he got to tell not just a *LAZARUS* story – but a **JESUS** story

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'cause Steve was able to share his dad's sure hope in Jesus

...to quote something he said over and over in his final months and days...

*My trust is in Jesus.
I know where I am going.*

Do you? Do you believe this?

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When Jesus asks the question: *Do you believe this?*"

His answer with John is YES!

...and it can be YOURS too

Y'know a lot of SENTIMENTAL things are said at funerals

...people watching over us now

...or LIVING in our hearts

...can I say...without Jesus...

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...without the death and resurrection of Jesus – it's all just WISHFUL thinking.

...I'm not the resurrection and the life

...my Dad is not the resurrection and the life

...you're not the resurrection and the life

...JESUS is.

See Jesus didn't just weep with sadness at Lazarus' tomb. Deeply moved. Enraged even. At the enemy death. Even then setting himself to call it out – boss it – defeat it.

For Lazarus. For Dad. For me. For you.

Without Jesus... dead people walking.

...see Jesus draws beside us in life and in death... and he weeps with us that we might know joy

...and he dies for us that we might know life.

And as he draws close to you...maybe it's time for you to have a conversation with him?

...I've got a conversation like that to show you

...and then we'll have our own conversation with Jesus in prayer

Video plays...

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Dear Heavenly Father

At Easter we thank you for Jesus.

We thank you that when we weep – he’s been there.

We thank you that when we die – he’s been there.

And we thank you that in his resurrection – you are here.

Help us to believe. To trust. That Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

In Adam we are dead people walking.

So we want to enter this new story of life.

Fill our hearts with trust in Jesus who takes away death’s sting.

That in him, though we die, we will live.

Amen