

May the words of my mouth and thoughts of all our hearts be ever acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Imagine the scene, it was early dawn – three women make their way quietly toward the tomb of Jesus. As they make their way down the road their eyes might have been called again to a hilltop called Golgotha “The place of the skull”. There on that hill three crosses still stand. As they see the hill bathed in the long shadows of predawn, their minds must have made the journey through those three long days spent in the shadows of the cross. From the dark shadows of Gethsemane’s brokenness, to the even deeper shadows of death cast by the cross under a sun that hid its face, now to the shadows of a tomb where lay all their hopes and dreams.

With each step the shadows seemed more menacing. Those three crosses standing on the hill a stark reminder of pain and death not only of Jesus but of hope itself. Who will move the stone they ask each other? How can we finish the job of burying Him? What will we do next? But at the moment when darkness and shadows seemed to have won – a new day dawns. The sun peeks over the horizon – its light piercing the shadows – night becomes day – shadows begin to recede – and hope is reborn. The hope we have in the resurrected Christ.

In the light of a new day these women find a stone rolled away. The stone that was placed in front of the tomb was a large boulder. These women were on a mission – and it was truly mission impossible. They weren’t strong enough to move the stone – they had no authority to move the stone or to order it moved. They simply had a heart to minister to their friend. But when they arrived – the stone was already moved.

One of the greatest promises of Easter is that no stone is too big for God to move. These women they were facing larger obstacles than just a rock – they faced doubt, fear, frustration, pain, grief. All the things they faced were too big for them. But not too big for God. That’s also true for us today – there is no stone in our lives too big for God to move. As we face stones of frustration, doubt, fear, financial health or emotional crisis, it doesn’t matter, no stone is too large for God to move.

Can you imagine it! Can you imagine for even one moment what those women felt when they got to the tomb and found it empty! What must have gone through their minds? Did they think they were dreaming? Did they think they

might have come to the wrong tomb? After all, it was early morning and their eyes were blurred with tears and from lack of sleep.

But it had to be the right tomb; they could never forget the tomb where they laid Jesus' body. But the stone was rolled away and when they went into the tomb, his body was gone. Luke says, "they were perplexed about this." It might be more accurate to say they were looking around apprehensively and in fear.

Jesus was dead. Everything they had dreamed of, all their hopes, all their joys, everything that gave life meaning had been buried in that tomb and sealed up when that massive stone had been rolled across the opening. Jesus was dead. His body was supposed to be in that tomb. And now his body was gone. How was that even possible? But then there are these two men standing there telling them that "He is not here, but risen."

The stone was rolled away; not so that Jesus could get out. He was in his resurrected body; he needed no open door to walk through. No, the tomb stood open so that we could look in; as proof that no body lay there. In this empty tomb we find the power of our faith. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 17-19, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." Our faith is distinctive – we serve the one – the only one – who laid down his life and had the authority to take it up again. The one who is the risen and living saviour of the world – not because he said it but because the empty tomb proves it. Christ is risen! Once again we proclaim the awesome mystery of our faith!

If we keep the resurrection in the past – making it only a historical event, and arguing about the facts and details – we keep its transforming power at bay. It's easy to say "Jesus is risen", knowing it in our minds, without it having any impact on our lives. But, when we allow our hearts to be captivated by resurrection life – the all-embracing, empowering, inclusive, transforming life that transcends all evil and unjust forces that divide and oppress humanity – then we don't only say "Jesus is risen", we live it! As we rejoice again in the good news of the resurrection, I'd like us to take a few minutes to listen and ponder some wonderful words.

Play Resurrection Hymn.

And we are raised with Him, Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
And we shall reign with Him, For he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

Let us pray; Father God as we rejoice in the power of the risen Christ on this Easter morning, we give thanks that you loved us so much that you gave your only Son so that we might have eternal life. Send us out in the power of your spirit to live his risen life that all might know you as their Lord and Saviour. **Amen**