

**SERMON:DIOCESE OF FBUNBURY: EASTER 5/4/2026: GEOFF HADWICK
THE LIVING DEAD AND THE DEADLY LIVING.**

Matthew 28.1-10

¹ After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Matthew's version of the resurrection stories includes a number of "special effects" not found in the other Gospels.

Matthew adds the earthquake, and the angel rolling the stone away. Furthermore, he incorporates the living dead and the deadly living.

In Matthew we have the guards in so much fear that they became like "dead men" (Mtt 28:4, NRSV). Later we have Jesus, presumably dead, now raised to life. This is irony at its best. In Jesus' day, the penalty for guards losing a prisoner was death. Strangely the penalty is fulfilled, even if only in a metaphorical way. And Jesus who should have been "dead and buried" is raised. In a sense their prisoner has gotten away!

The word used here for *raised* is *egerthe* which means *to arise*, or *get up from sleep*. Luke and John use the term *anastasis* meaning *to stand up*. The meaning is a bit nuanced because it does not mean to be resuscitated. The Gospel writers are talking about something other than Jesus simply returning to life as he has previously been. No, there's something else going on! It's full of mystery!

The resurrection, is not a simple “patch up” job on the dead Jesus. It is a Godly act of recreation!

This can never be understood. It is mysterious. And it is wonderful!

The risen Jesus is a completely reformed Jesus. A Jesus greater and more wonderful than he was before!

This is good news, because if Jesus’ resurrection was simply a resuscitation nothing has changed. The Gospel accounts tell us that what was witnessed at the resurrection was a complete change in Jesus. We are told that, in God, all things may be made new.

The first resurrection witnesses could not comprehend this, but they experienced it!

Their experiences were greater than words. Even so, they realised that at the resurrection moment, a new world had begun. A world where deathly human ways do not have the last say. A world where pure love conquers all, and a world where the destruction of God is not possible. God, is greater than our deathly ways. God, makes all things new.

How do we know? Because his earthly Son has been made new!

So, when we lose hope, and when we despair at the evils we humans perpetuate, we know this is not the last word. God raises Jesus from it all!

Perhaps the scripture “sleeper awake” (Eph 5:14) is appropriate here. Jesus’, reawakening, challenges us to be re-awakened people as well. The challenge is to give up our deathly ways and to be on the side of resurrected life. To promote the goodness of life. To “put to bed” our deathly ways and to “awaken” our desire to co-operate with the God of recreation!

Is there something we need to “put to bed”?

Is there hope that needs rekindling in us?

Are we prepared to follow the steps of those two Marys who trudged to the empty tomb only to be surprised by joy? Are we prepared to give up our fears and be overwhelmed by Good News?

We have God's good news within us! Are we able to share this with the despairing world?

I hope so!

At resurrection, even our very thinking is transformed by the God of new creation. So let's tell the word!

After all, that's what every biblical witness to the resurrection was told to do!

It was Archbishop Peter Carnley who in his masterful study on the resurrection concluded that all Gospel story, preaching, religious hymns art and worship are not enough to fully comprehend the resurrection. All we can do, he says,

... is to stand in God's presence in the silent awe of worship: thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of Christ himself, for Christ is risen: He is risen indeed"

(Carnley, P, 1987 *The Structure of Resurrection Belief*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, p368)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.