



BECAUSE OF JESUS

Part 4: Easter Sunday

Because of Jesus – we are transformed into a new reality!

After lunch, a group of us went for a walk just near our home. Just a short way along our street we turned into a beautiful bush area with many walking trails, a pond, native flowers, and a view over a waterfall. On this day the area seemed so beautiful, and so different to the street we had just left that one of the people in our group exclaimed, "It's like we just climbed through a portal into another world!" On that first Easter morning, as the stone was rolled away, it was like a portal was opened to a whole new reality. For followers of Jesus, this new reality transforms how we live and is a cause for hope and great rejoicing!

Because of Jesus... death is not the end

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the first glimpse of the shafts of breaking dawn that will one day flood the sky with brilliant light in the new heaven and the new earth." Christopher Watkin, (Biblical Critical Theory), 438.

The new reality began when death was defeated. What changed? Well, Jesus had died. He breathed his last breath. They didn't need to break his legs because he was already dead (John 19:33). They pierced his side and water and blood flowed, demonstrating that he was indeed dead (John 19:34). John testified to the truth that he was dead (John 19:36). But on the first day of the week everything changed. The tomb was empty. Mary broke the news. John investigated the grave clothes and believed.

Jesus appeared to many people, and even to Thomas who was doubting! He had risen from the dead.

Paul declares that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus' resurrection is the first of many to come, like the rays of the morning sun ushering in a new day. He is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Incredibly, it is in him that we are raised to new life (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and because he lives, I can live in him, forever. Death is not the end!

Because of Jesus... we live in a new reality

Life was different for Jesus' resurrected body. After he rose, he walked through a locked door (John 20:19). He appeared, disappeared and ascended to the heavens (Mark 16:12, 14 & 19). This was a different reality for Jesus to that before the resurrection - none of things would have been possible in his earthly body prior to his resurrection. Yet, some things were similar about Jesus. Though he was not easy to recognise there was a resemblance (John 21:4). His hands and side still had marks (John 20:27). He was able to eat (John 21:15).

We too, in our new life with Christ, have begun a new reality. The new creation has begun for us in Christ. The old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Life is different for us. Jesus is risen and is our Lord! Sin has been paid for (Romans 6:10)

and we have been forgiven and made alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5). Christ lives in us by his Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11). In Christ we have eternal life, and we have crossed over from death to life (John 5:24). Yet our new life in Christ is not completely different to before. We are still the same person. We are just living in a whole new reality. We still struggle with sin, our bodies get older and let us down, and we live a world that is nowhere near what it will be in the new heaven and earth when Christ returns.

Because of Jesus... we have a new job to do!

"Jesus is risen, therefore God's new world has begun. Jesus is risen, therefore Israel and the world have been redeemed. Jesus is risen, therefore his followers have a new job to do."
NT Wright, (Surprised by Hope), 305.

Jesus humbled himself and was obedient to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Because of this, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9). For followers of Jesus, our work is to serve as Christ served, humbly, thoughtfully, and sacrificially.

Although we live in the tension of knowing that this world is not what it was in the garden, and not what it will be in the new heaven and new earth, we do not labour in vain (1 Cor 15:58) but persevere in sharing the hope we have in Christ, and seeking to put right the wrongs we see around us, knowing one day all will be made new.

On this Easter Sunday, we sing a new song! Christ is risen, we live in a new reality, and we have a new job to do! Hallelujah.

Questions for reflection

- Jesus rose again! If you are a follower of Jesus, death has been defeated your death will not be the end! What does this mean to you? Does it change how you think about the future? Explain
- In Christ we are new creations! As those forgiven, with the Spirit of God in us, having eternal life, we have life to the full. Yet we still struggle with temptation, sin and suffering. How do you live in this tension?
- We have a new job! How are you being good news to those around you? Is there something that the risen Christ is calling you to put right in your community, street or family? Share and pray for each other.

Rev Jonathan Stark