

# Easter Sunday

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Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Happy Easter, everyone. Last week I asked the question, what's your relationship like with death?

! Do you think about death that much? And of course it's one of those things that makes us uncomfortable to think and process. Sometimes we want to live as though we live forever and everything that we do revolves around everything here and not everything that is to come.

I was just talking to Danny and Grace as we were coming up and for those of us who gathered here on Friday for the Good Friday time that we had and some of you stayed to watch the Passion of the Christ, which is such a horror on so many levels, right?

It's so painful on so many levels. How in tune are we with the death of Christ and what it actually means? There were some people in the day of the church back then when this book was written, where they were disputing that.

Last week we talked a little bit about that, 1 John 5. John was saying, hey, he's not just God because of the baptism, he's God because of his blood. I know there are some churches actually, there are some movements happening around the world where they're trying to rub those things out a little bit or at least to water them down.

[1:13] They say, actually, we don't want to talk about death. We don't want to talk about the crucifixion. We don't want to talk about these things because they're a little bit too offensive to us. So actually there's churches around, there's people around, you know, let's not talk about that.

Let's just talk about Jesus being a good guy, being a good teacher who teaches us the way to live. But as actually Joe said on Friday, if your answer to the question, how will I get into heaven?

If it starts with the word I, then you've lost it. Then you won't get, that's not the point. You don't get into heaven because of anything that you do. You get into the heaven because blood was spilled on your behalf because someone did something for you.

And so if we kind of skim over that and just say, Jesus was a nice guy. He's teaching me the way to live and I'm going to live the way of Jesus and love people like he did. That's enough. No, that is not enough. That's why John was saying, it's only by the blood.

It's only when you get confronted with this idea that someone died for us, for you and I. The word we used on Friday was expiation, which is actually transferring your sin and the blood that comes with that because the wages of sin is death.

[2:16] We transferred using red paint and we put it onto the cross. And we transferred our sins, our paint onto the cross and then we washed our hands. That moment wrecked me because I was like, wow.

That's what is happening here. And I never want to lose sight of that. I will never want to lose sight of the fact that one day I will die. But it won't be an eternal death because someone paid that price for me.

How huge is that? It's one of the crucial parts that John was trying to address as we went through the book of 1 John. And actually today I want to address another one, which is what Paul was wanting to address. And it comes from 1 Corinthians 15.

And it is the chapter. If you're looking for a chapter on the resurrection, this is the chapter. And Paul addresses it and says, actually, because there's other people who are saying, hey, it's not about the death.

And it's also, this guy didn't come back to life again. In fact, since the beginning of time, man has been obsessed with immortality. People ask us, why is your Chinese fairly good?

[3:17] It's because we, Joe and I, we grew up watching TVB. And one of the, all the dramas about, like, especially the old ones is about, right? It's finding the way to live forever.

The Jews were arguing all the time. Can someone be resurrected? And so there was this, all this talk that Jesus was a man. He was a good man. But then he died and that was it. And then Paul's like, no, no, no, no, no. Anyway, the reason why we gather here today is I think the same, I hope is the same reason why the people gathered in the very beginning when time, when we're starting to count the calendar again from basically 33 AD onwards.

Why? Because someone died, faced the very thing that we're all most afraid of and came back to life. Came back to life.

I can't just sit at home now and just carry on doing the thing that I'm doing because someone died, defied the laws of science and nature and came back to life.

[4:20] I must respond in some way. And so Paul's doing that. And I want to open up two places today. One is the resurrection story, which is the book of John. But I wanted to start off with 1 Corinthians 15, the chapter on the resurrection.

And I want to read it to you. I believe there's nothing more powerful than just the word of God itself. And even Acts 2.42, we'll talk about this again in a couple of weeks. It says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

That doesn't mean they devoted themselves to the apostle and to follow the apostle around. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, which is basically what we have here in this book. And I don't believe there's anything more powerful than this.

And I wanted to read to us 1 Corinthians 15 from 1 to 19. We do a thing here at the gathering, which is we try to remind ourselves of the holiness and reverence that we must have for this book.

That this book really does give life. So can I invite you to stand for the word of God? Thank you.

The apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15.

[5:28] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now, if Christ is proclaimed and as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

[6:36] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. We're even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. Paul is trying to tackle the most important thing here.

He's saying, this is it. Without that, we have nothing.

In fact, let's just say, now I remind you, the gospel I preach to you in which you stand. This is how you are saved. After I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, and we addressed that last week.

[7:50] He says this, if you don't believe in the resurrection of Christ, first thing is, your preaching or my preaching is useless. And some of you say, well, I didn't say it. You said it.

Preaching is useless. There's no point us gathering. There's no point being here if there isn't the resurrection of Christ. That's why we're here. What I'm trying to say, what I'm trying to proclaim, is the good news is that death has been defeated.

If that didn't happen, then there's no point being here. The second point he says is, not only is my preaching useless and futile, so is your faith. Your faith in this higher being that brings you comfort, that brings you salvation, that doesn't matter anymore, because the person that you put your faith in is dead.

He said, that's not right. And the other problem with that is, if your faith is futile, and he didn't rise from the dead, then actually you are still in your sins. If the wages of sin is death, then you are still in your sins, and it means you are still going to die.

What is that? Well, we talked a bit about that last week. We were created to be in communion and fellowship with God, so that we can have this life of flourishing. But instead, we decide to choose our own way, and we decide to trust either in our own wisdom or in God's wisdom, and when we say that, we're going to trust ourselves.

[9:05] And when we do that, we went from flourishing to perishing. And that's what really Christianity describes as sin. We've simply just turned our backs on God and said, we're going to go this way, not knowing or now knowing that actually that leads to death.

And you are still in your sins, and all those who have died will have perished, and we will perish. And most of all, we of all people are most to be pitied. That's what he's saying here. Just a bit of context here.

How much did it cost you to be at church today? How much did it cost you? How much did it cost you in this day and age here in Hong Kong to come to church for this Sunday morning? Probably not too much. Probably maybe a ride on the taxi or the MTR.

Maybe your friends are going out on a junk boat today, and you said, I can't go because I've got to go to church. How much did it cost you to be here? Really not much. Nothing in comparison to the people who are together at that time.

The context of theirs, the people that he was talking to, the people that were being read this letter, and they're saying, if Christ isn't risen from the dead, you are most to be pitied. Why? Because you're suffering persecution being here.

[10:12] You turning up here this Sunday morning, some of your family members might actually turn against you and snitch on you. Some of your friends who find out what you're doing here are going to snitch on you. And then they're living in poverty.

They're living in poverty. Why? Because of the values of the kingdom of God that they're trying to abide. Why? They can't carry on and conform to the ways of corruption that the rest of the business world are doing. So a lot of the Christians at that time, imagine yourself sat here in the secret room, threat of persecution right outside, and you're also poor because you're living by a set of values that means that you can't make as much money as you can.

So not only are you persecuted, you are also poor. And finally, you don't get to enjoy all the pleasures that your friends outside are doing because of these values. And he's saying, man, if Christ didn't rise from the dead, I have so much sympathy for you, so much pity for you, because your life sucks.

But if Christ did rise from the dead, then that changes everything. And that's what he's saying here. There's a couple of things that people have used to really dispute this idea of the empty tomb. And we're going to jump over to John 20 now. And actually today you have the pleasure, and maybe to your relief, not just me speaking, we have two people who are actually going to come and share a little bit as well. One is our dear friend, my dear friend, and our dear Deacon Tony, and also Kelly, who was killing it on the keys.

[11:42] And so, but before that, I just wanted to set a little bit of the scene. John 20, of course, is the resurrection story. And so when everyone was reading it just then, that was such a blessing.

Seriously, such a blessing to hear that. Well done. And thank you, Alex, for organizing that. That was just so good. John chapter 20.

Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb while it was still early.

Who wakes up when it's still dark? My wife wakes up when it's still dark right now because she's feeding. Can you just imagine? Actually, I know this.

When I'm waiting for something heavy or some decision, I remember waking up at 4 a.m. and just checking my email to see if I got anything. Just this stirring, this anxiety that's in my heart.

[12:40] I can imagine Mary Magdalene had this. She wakes up. It's been a couple of days now. It's still dark. She can't sleep anymore. It's 3, 4 a.m. I can't deal with this anymore.

This grief that I have. And so she goes to the tomb early while it's still dark and she discovers what? It's empty. It's empty. Now, many scholars and theologians have talked about this.

This fact of the empty tomb is what's going to prove to us that the resurrection really did happen.

You see, some people say, well, actually, maybe he didn't die.

Maybe he didn't die. Maybe that's how we explain that people still saw Jesus. You see, the problem with that one is that you're totally underestimating the ability of the Romans to kill someone.

The crucifixion, as we talked about, was the most brutal and humiliating form of execution that they could have. And the Romans themselves were experts in killing people. So to say that, oh, Jesus managed to survive the cross, to survive carrying the cross, to survive getting beaten the days before, and those of you who watched the Passion of Christ, maybe that's where it really hits home.

[13:46] And all those things that happened to him, and then they drove a spear into his side where blood and water would come out, and they're bleeding, and you think that Jesus survived that. Not only do you think that, you think that they somehow managed to put him in the tomb, and then he had the strength to wake up that morning and to push the tomb to the big stone side, see the Roman soldiers and say, hey, what's up, guys?

I'm going to beat you up now and run away. Guys, I played basketball yesterday morning. I played with Bill's son. Like, I could barely walk this morning just from playing basketball.

You're telling me that Jesus not only didn't die, that he subjected himself to all of that pain, and yet still managed to somehow get out of the tomb. Okay, then.

There's a problem with that. Well, then, actually, other people say different things. The Jews will say, well, actually, someone stole the body. Maybe that's something. See, the problem with this is, actually, we see this in the accounts.

They were worried about this because they had heard that these people of the way who were following Jesus, that they had heard about his resurrection, so they went to the Romans and said, hey, there's going to be this thing that happens because they're going to try and say that Jesus is alive, and the way to do that is they're going to steal the body and say, you don't have the body, so why don't we steal the body first and protect it and guard it?

[15:06] That's why the Roman soldiers were there in the first place. You see, the problem with that is, one day, three days of this rumor going, one week, one month, one year, at some point, if you were the Jews who had plotted this, you would have been like, you know what, let's just bring the body out, and that'll show everyone that this way is fake, but they didn't do that.

Actually, the Muslim scholars have a different view, which is actually a lot of them believe that the Jesus that appeared to the people was Jesus' twin brother. So they're like, okay, well, Jesus did die, but the one you saw wasn't Jesus, was Jesus plus, and that's it.

The problem with that, of course, there's just so many problems with that, but there's accounts of his siblings and all these other people, and again, this was writing to people who were still alive, who knew who Jesus was.

Jesus himself faced resistance from people who knew him growing up. You were still in nappies when I was an adult, Jesus. I can't believe who you are, that you are who you say you are.

I've known you since a little baby. It's hard to fathom. So that one really doesn't quite make sense either. Some of the reasons why actually the resurrection of the dead really does hold on its own, and actually N.T. Wright talks a lot about this.

[16:31] First of all, the transformation of the people around him. If you look at the account of what happens in the Gospels, the cowards, people, when Jesus was arrested and taken away and crucified, his disciples ran away, sometimes naked.

They would betray Jesus and deny that they knew Jesus even in front of young girls. Those are the kind of people that were following Jesus on the last days, and suddenly, can you explain how suddenly their lives and their mindset completely transformed to the point where they were going around fearlessly sharing the Gospel?

Peter, who denied Jesus three times, suddenly now is willing to die. All of the disciples were killed, martyred for this. Does that even make sense?

How these small group of people transformed completely and ending up starting a revolution that completely outlived the Roman Empire? That doesn't make sense. You know what else doesn't make sense?

The fact that Jesus' own family believed that he was God. Jesus' own brother brought in that he was God. I have a problem believing that my brother is a man.

[17:44] Let alone God. somehow, somehow, somehow, somehow, Jesus managed to convince his own brother and his own mother that he is God. That's God to count for something.

Somehow, he managed to meet a mass murderer, the persecutor of the church in Paul, the most zealous of them all in trying to stamp down this Christianity. Somehow, he managed to turn him to believe as well.

This doesn't seem to make sense unless there was the resurrection of Christ. What else is there? The actual witness account. Now, if you've read stories, one of my favorites, Harry Potter, platform nine and three quarters from King's Cross, that story, J.K. Rowling, that just beautifully written story, there's so much detail and it's just perfect.

Lord of the Rings, J.R. Tolkien is probably something similar as well. All these beautiful myths and stories. If this was supposed to be a myth, then actually, it would be a very poor myth. If they were trying to write this to convince people of the resurrection of the dead, they've gone about it completely the wrong way.

First of all, when you're trying to convince people that someone rose again, the witness that you have is very important. And back in those days, to have a woman be the witness wouldn't stand at all.

[19:00] And yet here, what does Jesus do? Jesus chooses to introduce himself to a woman. Not only any woman, one who was formerly demon-possessed.

A person who everyone else would ignore. If you're trying to make up a story that other people believe, you've gone about it the wrong way completely. The story itself is a terrible story and actually sheds terrible light on the people who were trying to spread the news.

If this was Peter trying to start something, because he didn't want to go back to fishing, let's say, even though actually the account says, he doesn't know what to do, so he ends up going back to fishing. Let's say he was so obsessed with this Jesus and the reputation that he'd gained.

He's like, let's just keep this going. Guys, let's make up a story and let's keep it going. He writes this account and puts himself in such a bad light. Peter is so lame through most of this story. If you are writing this and trying to convince people to have faith in you and believe in you, you've once again gone about it the very wrong way.

Again, if you're to make up a story, you don't make it up in the town where people still know you.

This is what they do. They stay in Jerusalem because if you're going to make up a story, you say, hey, I know someone who lives in Kazakhstan.

[20:14] You don't know them, but that's okay. Trust me because I know there's someone in Kazakhstan who managed to defeat death and is now living, but you can't see him. That's not what they're saying.

The account here is, not only did he show himself to Mary Magdalene, but then to Peter and then to 500 people. Every other religion, the Mormonism, Joseph Smith says, hey, I've received a download from God.

It's only from me and so you're just going to have to trust me and you're going to have to follow me. Christianity here is saying, no, it's not just one person that's made this up. You're either going to have to believe that 500 people were hallucinating together.

But those of you who know about hallucinations, what are those? These hallucinations happen with just one person. It is not a public experience. And yet you see here that it's 500 people and he says this and he calls people out by name and says, hey, some of them have died, but some of them are still alive.

What does that mean? Go check. That means go check that this is real. Even in the story to the walk to Emmaus where he walks with these two people who've seen all the hype, thought they believed it, Jesus died and then they decided, okay, it's time to go.

[21:24] Nothing to see here. So they walk and the account there, even that one, if you're making it up, you'd give more details. But in the account here, you've got Cleopas and some other unnamed person.

Again, if I'm writing a story, I either tell one name or I don't tell any names at all. I just tell both names or just no names at all. But the account itself just shows that there is something that's just raw and real about the resurrection story.

the resurrection of Christ showing that he's still alive, convincing family members, convincing disciples, starting a revolution that outlives the Roman Empire, the most powerful one at the time.

The fact that there remains to be an empty tomb remains unchanged and there is no real explanation for it and that fact changes everything. See, then Jesus goes and introduces himself to something else more.

It's just interesting here, if I'm Jesus, I've been subjected to all this cruelty, all this pain. The Roman Empire tries to destroy me and then I come back to life.

[22:28] What am I doing when I come back to life? Man, I'm going Captain Marvel on them. I'm going to go straight to Caesar. I'm going to go, how are you at me now? I'm going to go and just fly up into the sky and just hover and just blast the cities and destroy them all.

Would you not? After having been through what you went through, would you not come and just show yourself to all the haters and destroy them? And what does Jesus do?

Jesus goes to his friends, goes to restore the people that he knew and he loved, one by one. There are a series of days, not many days, up until Pentecost, he goes and he just restores them.

He knows Peter is just Peter is just lost for words. He had all this gusto. I'll follow you everywhere. And then soon this little girl comes, ah, I don't know Jesus and he runs off. Peter is just, can you just imagine Peter's shame and what does Jesus choose to do? Instead of flying, hovering into the sky, threatening to bazooka the heck out of the Roman Empire and Julius Caesar, he goes and sits next to Peter by a fire and he says, Peter, do you love me?

[23:43] Peter says, I can't even say yes, but no, but yes. And Jesus goes on this journey, this patient, gracious journey to restore Peter.

That's the Christ that we know. He meets Mary Magdalene who put all her hopes in him. She was cast out by society and she's weeping in the tomb because she has nowhere else to go and he goes to her first.

and she's grieving and she's at a loss. She doesn't even recognize him until what? Until she says, he says her name, Mary.

And suddenly, being called by a name by the risen Christ, she realizes who it is. I'm going to invite Kelly up now because even the story of Mary Magdalene is fascinating to me.

how Jesus chooses to meet her first and the question that I really have is, and Joe maybe had a great term there, which is the reality of the resurrection. And the question I asked Kelly to really pray over and ponder over this week was how does the reality of the resurrection meet us in grief?

[24:56] Because Mary Magdalene was grieving. We are grieving about something. We're at a loss about something. So the question here is we know how important the resurrection is.

We know that it happened. The question really is what does it mean to us? And so I want to just, Kelly's going to share for five minutes on how the reality of the resurrection impacts her when it comes to the issue of grief.

Can we give her a round of applause? Is that good? Good morning, brothers and sisters. Pastor James mentioned that on Good Friday we watched a movie called The Passion of Christ which really portrayed the immense physical and emotional torture that Jesus went through.

It also portrayed Mary Magdalene, a good friend of Jesus who followed Jesus the whole way as he carried the cross to Calvary and she had to watch him get mocked, humiliated, flogged and eventually crucified.

Friday really seemed like the worst day ever. The Messiah was dead and in utter despair and hopelessness Mary went to the tomb on the third day.

[26:19] And when we look at the passage, John 20, verse 11 to 18 as Pastor James read, is it just me or did Mary really go through an emotional rollercoaster there?

She went from weeping and mourning to all of a sudden discovering the greatest news of all time. And she went and announced that I have seen the Lord announcing the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples.

And as I reflected over what happened there and what it means to me, I came to an understanding that a lot of the times in life, it feels like it's game over.

It's going to lead us into weeping, mourning, and hopelessness. But when the resurrected Jesus comes into the picture and when we just turn around and when he calls us by our names and we recognize the resurrected Jesus, weeping turns into rejoicing, mourning turns into dancing.

And just like Mary, we can freely and joyfully declare the good news of Jesus' resurrection. And we can rest assured that death is not the end.

[27:42] You and I will eventually spend eternity in heaven where every tear will be wiped away. There will be no more death, no more crying or pain or mourning.

And this is such a game changer for me because, as some of you might know, my mother, her name is Auntie Jean, in case you didn't know.

My mother and I have a really extraordinary and precious bond. 25 years ago, when the people around her and the culture of the world were telling her, it's, Kelly is an accident.

she's too much of a risk and... She's too big of a commitment.

My mother decided to seek and obey the voice of God and courageously gave birth to me in her mid-40s and that's why I can stand here today.

[29:03] And, whew, for as long as I can remember, she's been my best friend, my teacher, my counselor, my role model, and so much more.

And, I've shared with some of you here, whew, my biggest fear is losing her. The thought that one day she's going to depart from me makes my heart ache.

I know that that day is going to be painful. I will mourn and I will weep. But I also know that when I turn to and recognize the resurrected Jesus, I no longer have to fear because death is not the end. My mom and I will reunite in heaven and spend eternity with Jesus who is seated at the right hand of God. So, whew, Jesus' resurrection doesn't mean that there's not going to be bad days or difficult moments.

In fact, there is going to be tough times when it feels like you've reached the end and you just feel like you can't go on with this life anymore.

[30:35] But may I encourage you that when we are grieving and when we are mourning and weeping, Jesus meets us where we are. Just like how Jesus met Mary Magdalene in her despair where she was.

There is no battle in your life that is too difficult for God because even in the most difficult battle of all time, God came through. Jesus won the ultimate battle.

And we can stand in his victory and rise up again and again. And just no matter what we face, just know that it'll be all right.

So brothers and sisters, let us rejoice. Christ is risen. Jesus is alive. And I can't wait to proclaim this good news to the people in Thailand tomorrow as some of us go on mission.

Happy Easter! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm reminded in John 11, Jesus' close, close friends, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Lazarus dies and there's just grief and there's just crying and Jesus shows up and they're like, oh, if only you were here!

[31:54] And what does Jesus say? Those famous words, I'm the resurrection and life. 1

Thessalonians 4 says about this, we can grieve. If you're grieving, you can grieve.

You're allowed to grieve, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope. We grieve knowing there is hope, that this isn't the end. And that's what the reality of the resurrection means for us, that we can face all of those same things that everyone else faces in the world as well.

Because we will, isn't that, maybe this is too morbid, doesn't that fact just cross your mind every now and again, that every single person in this room will die?

It does to me all the time. Maybe I need to go see someone. But that's what I am acutely aware of.

And yet there is hope. And so I can grieve, but there is hope.

My brother says that he gets invited to more funerals than he does for weddings, which he should probably reflect on his own life about that. But he says, actually, he loves going to funerals.

[33:01] And I also like going to funerals because there's just this, it's just, it's beautiful in this way where you are reminded of the, just the treasure that is life and how we should live every day.

And we're reminded that Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. I hold the keys to death and Hades. And now I'm alive forevermore. So Jesus meets us at our grief.

He then has this story, the next story along, which is another fascinating one, because as Jesus is starting to appear to people, there's a guy who gets ultimate FOMO, fear of missing out completely. And who's that guy? Thomas. Tommy boy. So he's out and is somewhere else. And then the friends, the disciples, they're in a room and they meet Jesus.

And then Thomas misses out and then he comes back. And they're all just in hysterics that Jesus is back and he's alive. Thomas gets a lot of grief from all of us.

[34:07] Oh, you're doubting Thomas. But if you and I were Thomas, we would do exactly the same thing that Thomas does. Would you not? You walk back into a room with all your friends and everyone's grieving. He probably just went to take a walk and just to kind of get some fresh air.

He comes back and everyone's just gone crazy. We saw him, we saw him. And he'd like, in my mind, I'd be like, you guys, you guys have lost it. You all lost it.

And then so he says, hey, look, I'm trying to just remain even keeled here. Just, I need to see it to believe it. And little did he know that that would then be coined for him for the rest of his life.

They're like, you are all doubting Thomas's. He's like, man, that's just the real thing to ask. Jesus then, eight days later, meets him in his doubt. Which again, is a fascinating story.

He could be destroying the Roman Empire and yet here he is saying, Thomas, I'm going to circle back around. I'm going to meet you in your doubt. There are some of you who have sat here who are like, okay, well, I get it.

[35:11] Fairly compelling case. Not looked into it too much. Not cared quite enough either. But I don't know. I still have some doubt. The question that I have for Tony is actually, how does the reality of the resurrection meet us in our doubt?

And what does that mean for him? And again, Tony has been spent this week just mulling this over. He's been very gracious because he was going to talk about something else and then I gave him this last minute and he's changed. So can we give a round of applause to Tony?

Thanks, James. Feels a little bit weird to share the stage with Kelly. He used to be my Sunday school student.

In fact, the last time I did something like a message was many years back during Sunday school. So James asked me to talk about Thomas. I looked him up in the Bible.

There's not a whole lot of things about Thomas in the Bible. In fact, the only book that talks about what Thomas talked about was in John, the Gospel of John.

[36:17] We kind of knew that Thomas was a good man with a good family because he's got a Jewish name and he's got a Greek name. It was in the Bible that we're in John.

Didymus. It's kind of like when, you know, in the good old days of Hong Kong, we're under the British colony. Some of us were given British name on top of a Chinese name, right?

So we got this very long name, you know, identity card. So he's got parents that actually are pretty well to do and I figure that's probably want him to be successful in the days where he lived in Galilee, say a major city under the Roman Empire at the time.

So we didn't really know much about Thomas, but from the very few verses in the book of John, we knew he's a pretty good disciple among the 12.

You know, he's well-spoken. He urges his peers on, even though at times that people were not sure. And he asked questions and he chimes along with Jesus, you know, teaching.

[37:35] But the most famous thing that people knew about Thomas was this thing about him asking questions about, hey, you know, I don't believe that Jesus resurrected.

And unless I see his hands and sigh, I don't believe that. So he's famous for being a doubting Thomas.

So we probably have our fair share of doubting Thomas around us. I met a few very nice people, thanks to Alex, during our Alpha sessions a few weeks back.

These are very nice men, pretty much similar age to me, very bright, Cambridge-trained, physicians and scholars.

And they kind of okay with this God existence, but they had a really hard time to believe that Jesus resurrected from death.

[38:38] And they all saying, show me the evidence. I need scientific evidence to believe it. And yet one of them, I had a good chat with him.

He was very much into Stephen Hawking's. And even though Stephen Hawking's, we're very much talked about, you know, in theory, based on mathematics, which is, again, cannot be repeated in a lap, as most science does.

So what about the doubting Thomas in us? In my 40 years of being a Christian, I had my fair share of doubts.

The one that I share would be speaking in tongues. So I've been to churches and I've been to gatherings where we heard people were speaking in funny, you know, dribbish language.

And I had my doubts, you know, is this really what the Bible was describing in the book of Acts, where people are filled with Holy Spirit and they speak a foreign language.

[39:50] And in the book of Acts, they actually talk about interpreters. So I have never met an interpreter who actually interprets for me.

And yet, I learned to accept that perhaps, you know, the speaking of tongues is a spirit-filled act. Even though I myself have really not experienced that. So in our faith journey, we all have our moments of doubts.

I believe God can handle us with questions and he would give us time so we can kind of work it out ourselves.

Right? Doubts are often a kind of a twisting path to a deeper, more meaningful faith.

[40:53] Doubts are a twisting path to a deeper and a more meaningful faith. We can't really avoid it. There's a way that through Thomas we can learn how to live with this mystery of doubt.

Jesus could have revealed to Thomas right after that evening gathering with the disciples when Thomas wasn't there.

But he waited eight days. Now that eight days probably is good for Thomas and maybe it's good for us as well.

we are given the opportunity to think, to seek, to question, and to listen to others to figure out our faith and how to handle these doubts that we have.

So we need to keep this as an kind of an open heart so the eighth day of hope can arrive.

Sometimes we have to wait what seems to be no good reason as well.

[42:19] It doesn't make any kind of sense. And it probably doesn't make sense for another thousand years after our lifetime. But I'm learning to be okay with that because when the time comes that waiting is over, like what Thomas is experiencing, I know we all will react to the same way that Thomas did, which is exclaiming in excitement, my Lord and my God.

Faith is assurance for things that we have not seen. if we see an evidence, then it is not faith.

Back to James. Thank you, Tony. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. What does the reality of the resurrection mean for you?

How can you apply it today? What does it mean for you? And the two accounts we see here are that Jesus in his grace meets you in your grief. Jesus in his grace meets you in your doubt.

And I love what Tony said, that doubt is the twisting path that you often have to go on to get deeper in the faith. Some of you come from church contexts where you're like, don't ask questions. Don't ask questions.

[43:47] The 5,000 were full, right? They were fed. Don't ask questions. Don't even doubt. Don't even grieve. And yet, that's not the God that is revealed in this book.

You see this book time and again, whether it's Jonah, who we're going to go through in a couple weeks, whether it's Elijah, whether it's Peter, those who have betrayed and disappointed and turned their backs on God, God seems to draw close to those people even more in the most patient, gracious kind of way.

You see, even after those accounts where Jesus shows up, chapter 21 in John, Peter doesn't really know what to do with himself. Can you imagine being Peter in that room when Jesus shows up?

He's usually the head of the table.

He's usually just up there. This time he probably would have just been, oh man. And there's no account of Jesus saying anything to him. Can you imagine just how Jesus would be feeling? Just tiny. And those eight days comes and then Thomas finally gets to see him and Peter would still be like, oh man, he's back.

I wonder whether he knows what I did. But then he rose from the dead so he probably knows what I did. And then he does this thing and he says, oh, I don't know what to do.

[45:02] I'm going to go fishing. And he's like, you know what, I'm just going to go back to what I knew. Maybe that's it.

Jesus didn't want to talk to me anymore. I have doubt, I have grief. I'm just going to go back. And yet it's in that moment he goes fishing and you show his leadership and you show what good leadership does and you show what bad leadership does because Peter says I'm going to go fishing and the other guys are like, we don't know what to do, we're going to come with you.

And Jesus in that moment meets him again. And this time he sits with him. And this time he speaks to him. And this time he restores him and he turns that shame into honor and love.

What does the reality of the resurrection mean for you? If you have had grief that has turned you away from him, then take comfort because he is still, his mercy and goodness is still following you. if you have doubts and you're like, I don't understand that, where did the dinosaurs go? I don't know, whatever your doubt is. What about the dinosaurs?

[46 : 25] Terry's like, what about the dinosaurs? Okay, we'll find someone smart to talk to you about that. But even in those doubts, ask away. Man, if God is not question-proof, then I don't know if he's God at all.

But he's bigger than your questions. And the other thing is, if you were to understand everything about him, then maybe he's not God either. So come at him with your doubts.

Hey, I have questions. Those two people walking away from Jerusalem, disappointed, leaving, he walks with them, speaks to them, opens up the word with them, and their hearts start burning.

Maybe that's some of us here. The resurrection in the Greek anastasis means to rise.

It means to cause one's feet to stand up, to stand on one's feet again. That is what we believe. That is what we hang our hats on.

[47 : 38] That is why we're here. And because of that, we have no fear of death. We have no worry about what our boss will say to us tomorrow. We have no worry about what our friends think of us, because someone died and rose again.

The fact that an empty tomb remains is the thing that changes everything. It has to. what does it mean for you?

I want to invite you to the last few moments now. If you have grief, if you have doubt, if you have disappointment, then I want to do what our resurrected Christ did and invite you in.

Come in with all of those things. Revelation at the end, he says, Behold, I stand under the door and knock. Whoever opens the door, I will come into him and I will eat with him.

I will be at the table with him. The resurrected Christ, you may have only heard about him, but there have been many greats who finally, who actually met him, whether it's the Apostle Paul, whether it's C.S.

[48 : 56] Lewis, whether it's the person sitting next to you, there are people in this room who have met that resurrected Christ, and that same Christ knocks on your door today.

We invite Alex and the team up as their leaders in the final song. Those of you who have grown up in church will know that this is usually what people do and after the sermon there's a song, something powerful about music that allows us to put into words, release words that we don't have ourselves.

That's why we sing. That's why football fans sing when they're in a stadium. That's why Arsenal fans are going to sing in about 12 hours time when we come out victorious. we're not smart enough to say any other words so we just sing stupid songs.

This is not a stupid song. This is not just a song that I want you to sing mindlessly. These words bring power. I praise the name Anastasis, someone rose again.

And because that someone rose again, we live. We live.

[50 : 16] We live forevermore.