

# TEACHING NOTES

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## 'Death is swallowed up in victory!' – An Easter Sunday Reflection

Isaiah 25:6-9, John 20:1-10, 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Resurrection Sunday is the most important day in all history. God's plan for redemption was made known in a new way to all people and death itself was defeated. Death is scary, the last great enemy, but it is not the end!

Isaiah foresees Jew and Gentile celebrating victory over evil and fellowship with God in the world to come. Seven centuries before Jesus God's plan for salvation was intended for everyone not just the Israelites. One day there will be abundance and feasting in God's presence and evil and death will be 'swallowed up' forever (v.8). These are God's own promises and cannot fail.

In John 20 (v.1) the stone where Jesus' body was placed had been rolled away. This was not so he could get out but that others could *get in* to see he wasn't there. Those close to him were confused what they found, and it took time for Mary Magdalene and the disciples to comprehend what had happened even though the resurrected Jesus appeared to Mary (v.14). It may take us time, too, to comprehend this incredible story. We may even be skeptics seeing the resurrection an elaborate hoax. Or like Peter, we may decide to check out the facts and still be puzzled (v.6); but, an encounter with the risen Jesus leads to faith and the pathway of discipleship and service.

*To deny the resurrection though, is to reduce the ministry and mission of Jesus to that of a mere man. And many people do just that: he's just another person suffering delusions of grandeur of whom the world has seen so many, but still a mere mortal.*

But that's not a balanced view. We can't just admire Jesus' values and commitment to a cause and ignore his claims as Messiah. His work far exceeded his earthly ministry alone. His mission was to reveal the coming reign of God and salvation for Gentile and Jew. Christ's death and resurrection did for us what we can't do ourselves: save from sin, satisfy God's requirements, and conquer death. And the resurrected and coming again Christ invites us to participate in his continuing work of redemption and sharing his love and life with others. We enter this new life by coming to Christ in faith, repenting of our sins, and inviting him to be Lord of our lives.

In our third passage Paul writes to believers at Corinth. They lived in a city known for its anything goes morality. Being a believer there was tough. He explains the resurrection based on the testimony of its factual basis. God raised Christ and he will also raise us to new bodies. All people will be raised physically on the last day. Christians, however, will rise to everlasting glory; those without faith, to judgment. What Christ accomplished (called 'first fruits' v.20) will be true for every believer. He speaks of the first Adam and Christ as the 'second Adam': in Adam all die, but all who believe in Christ will be raised to eternal glory. He's called the second Adam because he was God but came as a man, a perfect Adam – without sin.

It's a complex but important passage. Because Christ did what no one else before or since can do, Paul confidently asserts, 'death is swallowed up in victory' (note the Isaiah wording). Easter Sunday is so important because the power of death is broken and we have a future and a hope; not just for this life, but the world to come when everything will be made new.

An analogy: when night gives way to day darkness is displaced by light but it's a single continuum of reality. We could say *day has swallowed up night*. Like the resurrection, no human hand can create, hold back, or speed up this everyday miracle in the skies. No wonder the psalmist implores us to 'lift our eyes unto the hills' (**Psalm 121:1**) because this reminds us we are not in charge and there is a reality greater than our experience.

Similarly, Paul teaches death has been swallowed up in victory. Those with faith in Christ have *already* crossed *spiritually* from death to life – and like the night giving way to the day, it's a process that unfolds slowly; first in this life as we participate in the resurrection life of Christ and know the power and presence of his Holy Spirit, but it will not be complete until the future glory in *a resurrected body* when Isaiah's prophecy will be fully realised.

This great event affects not only us but speaks hope to our world, including the Covid-19 pandemic. Good Friday was bleak, but it wasn't the end. Death and despair were part of a greater story of hope. If Jesus is who he said he was, and did what he claimed to do – rising from the dead, appearing again to his disciples and later sending his own Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to bring his power and presence into every situation - *we are people of hope*. Christ conquered death and by his Spirit is with us now, tomorrow, and in the days ahead, right through to death, the grave and resurrection. *Alleluia!*



### Question to ponder

On May 24, 1738, in Aldersgate Street, London, John Wesley's intellectual conviction of faith was transformed into a personal [experience](#). He went on to be one of the greatest preachers in history. What is your 'Aldersgate' experience and how does the reality of Christ's resurrection impact your everyday life?