

# TIMC Online – Easter Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Reading:** Matthew 27 verse 57 to Matthew 28 verse 10

Happy Easter, everyone! Christ is risen! ... Yes, He is risen indeed!

There's so much in the Easter story that we could pick up on – and the single most important thing is, of course, simply this: that Jesus is alive, the significance of which is life-changing. However, I'd like us to focus our thoughts this morning on three things that we find in the Easter story: A stone, a cloth, and an empty hole.

## A Stone

The tomb into which Jesus' body had been placed was closed up by a big stone. The purpose of the stone was to keep people out and keep the decay in. Sorry to mention such an unpleasant thing, especially if you're tucking into an Easter egg just now, but it is what it is.

In 1979 the band Pink Floyd released the album *The Wall*, in which negative childhood experiences cause the central character to begin to construct emotional barriers to protect himself. This behaviour continues through into adulthood, until he is completely locked away – a prisoner within himself.

I want you to think about your heart right now. Is it perhaps closed up with a big stone to keep people out? Are there secrets that you've locked away, that you can't share with anyone? You may feel it's protecting you, but in reality, it's isolating you and it's keeping you in fear. God wants you to be free. He wants you to know His love. He wants you to know His forgiveness. He wants to roll that stone away from your heart.

Maybe you put that stone there to keep God out. Maybe giving your life to Jesus would be a difficult thing for you. Maybe you're afraid of the change it would bring, or maybe you're afraid of what people would say or think of you. Maybe any of a thousand things has caused you to put that barrier up, but whatever past influence is controlling your thoughts, God wants to set you free. Free to see the truth and to receive life from Him.

The stone in front of Jesus' tomb was big. Now, I've shifted stones in my time, and they are **heavy**! I've never shifted anything the size of this stone – nor anything anywhere near that size. It would have been far too big for one person to move it on their own, they'd need help.

Maybe you need help. If you want help rolling that stone away from the entrance to your heart, then ask God to help you. The angel of the Lord moved the stone. When you get God involved, nothing is impossible. Ask Him. Call on Him. He will answer.

## A Cloth

John's gospel tells us that when Peter entered the tomb he saw the strips of linen in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, and also the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head.

A cloth to cover the face.

Of course, to a lifeless body it makes no difference, but to a risen Jesus the cloth would be a hindrance, blocking His vision and hiding His face.

Now I want you to think about your own vision. Is anything preventing you from seeing clearly? Do you need, as it were, the veil removing so that you can see Jesus? Perhaps you've never noticed it before, but maybe now you're beginning to wake up to spiritual things and you want to see clearly. Remove the veil and look to Jesus. Ask Him to help you see the truth – He is the Truth, and He is the Life. He is the Way. Let Him come into your heart, let Him take away the veil and restore your vision.

And John records an interesting fact about the burial cloth of Jesus: it was folded up and placed by itself, separate from the strips of linen. Someone – presumably, Jesus – had taken the time to set things straight. When Jesus rose from the dead, as in His ministry prior to His death, He demonstrated His power to make things right. He healed the sick, He cast out demons, He set people free.

Jesus has the power to make things right in your heart and in your life. Will you invite Him in to do just that?

He can forgive sins. He can remove the guilt. He can bring healing and freedom, light and love. He alone can bring true peace.

### An Empty Hole

When Jesus rose from the dead, the tomb reverted back to what it had been before Jesus' body had been laid there – an empty hole.

Sure, there were a couple of angels hanging around for a short while, but just long enough to get the message across that Jesus wasn't there, He had risen. After they'd gone, it was just an empty hole.

Where are you looking to get answers to the big questions in life? Do you feel like you're looking in an empty hole? No answers to be found. No meaning. Maybe you're looking in the wrong place. Luke's gospel tells us that the angels said to the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Are you looking for living truth in the places of the dead? If you are, you won't find it! Jesus is alive! He has risen! He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. You can come to God the Father through Him – and only through Him. Don't waste your life looking for answers in dead places. Seek Jesus, the risen, living Saviour. He is the Answer.

Just as Jesus left an empty hole in the rock, so He now wants to fill the emptiness in your life.

Why don't you ask Him to come into your life and fill you with His love and His light; to forgive your sins and take away your guilt; to roll away the heavy stone that has weighed down on you and locked you in; to remove the veil and help you see the love and grace of God poured out for you in Jesus.

Let's pray now. Father God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour. Lord Jesus, come into my heart and take control. Take away the stone from my heart. Restore my sight, Lord. Heal me and set things right in my heart and in my life. Holy Spirit, come and fill me, teach me and help me to follow Jesus. Amen.

God bless you this Easter time and always.