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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service today. Special welcome to those from Scalladale who've been at the camp. They've probably had about four hours sleep over the last three days. So if anyone's feeling tired, just please stand and it'll help you stay awake during the service.

And if I spot any of you sleeping, I'll just ask you to stand. So just a warm welcome. It's good to have you all here and others who are visiting with us as well. It's good to have you with us this morning. There's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service. If you're able to stay behind, please do so.

The monthly gala service is at six tonight. That's Hamish Taylor that will be conducting that service. And we would normally have a monthly fellowship after that.

But because of the fellowship meetings over the course of the weekend in Graver, we decided not to have an English fellowship tonight, but to give the encouragement for as many as possible who can to head over Graver direction.

I think the evening service is at six. But there's an after church fellowship that Donnie and Jeff will be leading at half past seven.

[1 : 14] Ladies fellowship Monday night. Little Fishers Road to Recovery on Tuesday as usual. Prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven. It's actually the national day of prayer this coming Wednesday. So we'll think through various items nationally, internationally and locally.

And we'll pray through these items as we're given some guidance on Wednesday evening.

Thursday evening, we have the Thanksgiving meal, which was postponed from last Thursday.

And you have the details of that there on the screen, please. If you're able to come along to that, do so. And also note that there'll be an offering uplifted for the Harris Food Bank.

Donations of cash or goods for distribution would be welcome. And just on that, I was in a meeting yesterday in Stornoway. And one of the guys from the Salvation Army was at the meeting who helps to manage the food bank.

And he was saying that over the course of the last 12 months, in Stornoway, the food bank that's managed by the Salvation Army alone was visited 22,000 times.

[2 : 26] Which just give a real insight into the level of need that there is. They were saying that there are people who are struggling in town, from the country, and those who come back and forth from Harris, who will manage for three weeks of the month.

But in the final week of the month, they can't buy food and fuel. And so they'll be regularly visiting the food bank. So that statistic just shocked me.

22,000 times there's visits to the food bank in one year. Friday clubs, as usual. You've got the details there for this coming Friday.

Soup and pudding lunch in aid of Bethesda Hospice in Kenneth Street, Saturday, 3rd of December. And the services next Sunday, I'll take the morning service, God willing, and the evening service will be taken by Phil Pickett, who's the minister in training in Carlow.

I will be here, but I have a lot of meetings this week, and Phil has been encouraged to get around a little bit and preach in different places across the island. So we'll have Phil next Sunday evening, God willing.

[3 : 37] CDs of Kevin Ormond and Jenna are still available, and you have details there of who's on for church cleaning. And whoever put the chairs out in the church over the last few days, thank you.

I popped in last night to see, thinking that we'd have half a church that was empty, but the fairies had been in, and the churches were all in position. So whoever did that, I don't know who it is.

Thank you very much for doing that.

One final intimation is just to say, our sympathies are with Mary, Cameron, and David. You will likely have heard that Mary's late brother, Ian Norris, passed away a few days back, about a week or so ago.

And Mary and David are now back in Harris. There are arrangements that are ongoing, just to formalise things, but it looks likely that there'll be a funeral service on this coming Friday in Leverborough Free Church at 11 o'clock.

I'll take the service, but with Ian having been from South Harris, the burial will be in Borough, and the funeral service will be in Leverborough. This coming Friday at 11 o'clock, that's almost certain, but it's not quite certain yet.

[4 : 52] It's still to be confirmed fully. But that's what it's looking like. So you can take note of that and be encouraged to attend that as we come alongside those who grieve.

And these, I think, are all the intimations. So let's begin this time of worship. We'll sing to God's praise. Sing Psalms 16, and we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 8 of the psalm.

Protect me, O my God, you are my refuge true. I said you are my Lord, I have no good apart from you. So let's stand to sing to God's praise.

Protect me, O my God, you are my refuge true.

I said you are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.

[6 : 08] The God be in the land For holiness's freedom They are the glorious one to do All mighty light is found That sorrows will increase Who on what God rely I will not sacrifice to them Their worship I defy

O Lord, you are to me My cup and portion should The ship that is assigned to me Your guard and keep secure The land that Lord in me Is in the present sight Unsurely by inheritance To me is our delight

I'll praise the Lord, my God Whose transfer guides my choice And even in the night my heart Recoused instructions voice Before me constantly I said the Lord our Lord Because he is at my right hand

I'll not be overthrown Let's draw an ear to God in prayer.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

[9 : 57] And we thank you for your word. We thank you for these promises That we've been singing of That speak to us about who you are And also speak to us about who we are And how we can be when we are trusting in you.

We thank you that when we have the Lord As our God We have the promise of protection We have a God who says That we can take refuge in him And we thank you Lord For that promise And for that privilege And we pray that you would help us to do that.

We thank you that this day In particular has been set aside Where we are enabled And encouraged And instructed To take refuge In you To be in that place of worship We recognize that In this world There are lots of things That cause us to be To be knocked To become unsteady There are things that Test us And trouble us Things that Cause us to be fearful But we thank you that When we are trusting in you We have the assurance That we have a God Who is stronger than all Who is with us And who promises never to leave us Nor forsake us So help us we pray Like the psalmist To be found When we're struggling To be looking to you Not looking away from you But looking to you And leaning upon you Help us to Each day Take time to be in your presence

Help us each day To be still And to know that you are God And that you are with us And we thank you that we worship The God who is sovereign We Acknowledge Lord With thanksgiving That Our lives are not Disordered They are not chaotic And this world is not Disordered and chaotic

Sometimes we Confess it looks that way to us And sometimes we Can't make sense of What we see happening around us And what we Experience in our own lives But we thank you that we We have the promise That there is a God Who is over all And who is working always To bring good to your people And glory to your name So help us to trust you Help us to trust you Often more than our eyes can see When we are looking Into things that we can't understand Help us we pray To bow In your presence And to acknowledge That you are God And that you are at work

Even when we can't see it And we thank you For the promise of salvation We recognise that We are those who are sinners We confess our sin And we know that If we were left in our sin We would have no hope Because the wages Of sin is death But we thank you that Jesus Christ Your son Our saviour Came into this world To face The reality The problem Of our sin We thank you that He took our sin Upon himself We thank you that He went to war With sin And Satan And death And hell And

on the cross He overcame And we praise you Lord That when we trust In him We have the promise That we too Will overcome We will not be overthrown But we will be saved When we are trusting In Jesus And we thank you For the wonder Of the promises That were given The promise of resurrection The promise of Eternal life

[13 : 41] We thank you that On a week Where we are conscious Of so much sorrow And so much death We have the promise Of eternal life For those who believe In Jesus And so we pray That you would enable Us each one To take hold Of that promise By faith To trust To believe In the Lord Jesus So that we will Know that we will Not perish But have eternal life When we pass Through death's dark veil And we pray for those Who are struggling Just now with grief We bring them to you We pray for Mary Cameron We pray for Kenny We pray for Elaine And our family At Stockinish We pray for Ross As he and the family Prepare to go away This week For Ross' Father's funeral We ask Lord That you would comfort That you would strengthen Each one of them That you would uphold them We pray for those Who are sick Those who are suffering Those who battle With addictions And who feel

That they cannot go on As we think of them Lord In our mind's eye We bring them to you In prayer And we pray for those Who are with us The young folks In particular From the Scalodale camp Thank you for so many Who have come To hear about Jesus And we ask Lord That you would be working In the hearts Of each one That in their Younger years That they would remember you That they would trust you And that they Would live their lives To bring glory To your name So hear our prayers Take away our sin Lead us and guide us By your spirit we pray And we ask this In Jesus name And for Jesus sake Amen Boys and girls If you would like To come forward That would be good How are you today

Good good I'm going to come down I know the rest I know some People can't see me But I'll come down Here I've got something To show you today As usual And I wonder If you know What these things are Any ideas Can you see them Behind there Chris do you go Is it when Like In Tesco Some people Have things on their ears And they're like We need a pack of bread Is it like For those who didn't hear that I should stand up Shouldn't I For those Is it like For those in Tesco Who've got things On their ears And it's like They get told Need a pack of bread It's kind of like that But not I didn't steal these From Tesco No Go on Michael They're earbuds

They're earbuds Yeah You listen to music People Yeah You listen to music What When you run When you hear Uh huh Okay Whichever you want Yeah So they're earbuds Kind of Yeah Callum What were you going To say You were going To go for the Tesco's one as well Yeah Well Michael Got it right They're earbuds I don't know If they're actually Called earbuds But what's different About these That they're attached Katie Yeah Because with earbuds You put them Right inside your ears Don't you And then you can hear The music inside your ears And is that good It's good Yeah That's why they're called

Earbuds That's calm Yeah So You put them inside your ears And you can hear the music So You can be sitting in your room And you've got your earbuds And you're bopping your head Like that Because you're hearing the music And your mum's going Callum Price Clean your room And you're like I can't hear a thing Just bopping away To your music So That's earbuds Katie You said These are different So Why would they Not go in your ears These ones But go Go around your ears Like that So they stay on properly That's one of the reasons What's the other reason Christy Well they haven't got a cable So you don't get muddled up That's not a good thing About them Yeah Ailey They're stuck together And they're not long Yeah I'm looking for something else What else is good About these

[18 : 54] You can hear the music Because they're on the outside Of your ear They don't get muddled up In your pocket Because they've got no wires They Shawnee Don't have to be plugged in Right Let me talk a little bit more They're wireless Not bluetooth Christy Yeah That's another thing That's another talk though Yeah Ailey Tell me again You can still hear people Around you And that's the good thing Because see if you're out Walking short And you've got earbuds in You could have the music up Maybe a little bit too loud And a car comes zooming along And you're crossing the road And the car's going too fast And it's quite dangerous But If you've got this On

Then I can still hear the music But because it's See Because it's not in my ear I can hear all the cars And so I get to hear What I need to hear But I'm aware Of the things that are happening around me Now tell me this What do we need To hear In our ears Or In our hearts If we're going to be safe If we're going to be Growing If we're going to be followers of Jesus What do we need to hear In our

ears Somebody else that hasn't answered What do you think John And how do we hear Jesus In the Bible And in Sunday school And in church And in jam And connect So So we want to hear The The word of Jesus In our ears Every day That's why we open up the Bible That's why we come to church That's why we have a quiet time

But we're living in a world Do we need to hear What's going on In the world Around us Yeah we do Don't we Because Jesus said In John 17 He said to his disciples Back then And to us He said I want you guys To be living In the world But I want you to be different From the world And if you're going to be different From the world You need to have My words In your ears And in your heart But you need to be careful About what you're hearing Around you So There can be Things that we hear YouTube videos Music Conversations with Friends Maybe in the In the playground Might go to a football match There's all these people Shouting around us And we're hearing All kinds of things In our ears Is everything that we're hearing Good No

Sometimes we've got to be careful Because there can be Dangerous things around us And we need to hear that So we can watch out For the devil And stay away From what's dangerous Because in this world There's all kinds of things That are good But there's all kinds of things That are trouble So we have to be Careful to Know what's around us And to see the dangers But we also Have to always Have God's word In our ears So even if I turn The volume All the way up Michael If the devil's telling us Bad stuff We don't want to hear it Do we?

We want to Make sure That we Hear what he says But we say Devil This is God's word And I'm listening to him And not you So Let's pray And let's ask for God's help As we think about these things Lord we Thank you for your word And we thank you That your word Gives us life We thank you That in your word We learn how to be saved And how to be safe forever We thank you That in your word We learn the right way to go The right way to live We learn how to have hearts That are really happy And satisfied As we follow Jesus And we pray That you would help us To have your word Always in our ears And always in our hearts But we recognise That we live in a world And there's all kinds Of other Noises And attractions And instructions That sometimes Can take us off course And we We know that we We need to listen

[23 : 40] To what you Have to say So help us We pray To be alert To the dangers In this world So that we don't Get knocked over But to be always Listening To what you are saying We thank you Lord Jesus That you've said to us That you want us To be in this world And to enjoy All the good things That you've created But to be different From the world Because we are following you And not the ways Of the world So help us To be wise And guard us From danger Help us to be careful About the things That we hear around us And to have ears And hearts That are full Of the Bible So speak to us Lord we pray Today and every day And we ask all this In Jesus name Amen We're going to sing Now And we'll sing The words of the hymn Speak O Lord As we come to you Be good Lord

As we come to you To receive the food Of your holy word Take your truth Planted deep in us Shape and fashion us In your likeness That the light of Christ Might be seen today In our acts of love And our deeds of faith Speak O Lord And fulfill in us All your purposes For your glory Teach us Lord Full obedience Holy reverence

To you Lady Trust our thoughts And our attitudes In the radiance Of your purity Cause our fear to rise Cause our eyes to see Your majestic love And our authority Words of power That can never fail Let their truth be made Oh what unbelief Speak O Lord And renew our might Help us grasp the heights Of your plans On us True sun Change from the dawn Of time

That will end your death Through eternity And by grace We'll stand On your promises And by faith We'll walk As you walk With us Speak O Lord Till your church Is built And the earth Is filled With your glory The earth Flick As you walk okay let's turn now as the children go to Sunday school let's turn to Luke chapter 23

Luke chapter 23 this is the the last time we'll look at this part of the Bible until I think we'll probably pick it back up just for a week or two in the new year but we'll move on to thinking about the Christmas story the journey to the Christmas story next week God willing so Luke chapter 23 and we're reading at verse 50 we've just read in the previous verses of the death of Jesus the crucifixion of Jesus and the responses of the criminals the centurion and various people to the death of Jesus and now we come to verse 50 of chapter 23 and we're introduced to a man called Joseph of Arimathea this is God's word now there was a man named Joseph a member of the council a good and upright man who had not consented to their decision and action he came from the Judean town

of Arimathea and he was going and he was waiting for the kingdom of God going to Pilate he asked for

[29 : 14] Jesus body then he took it down wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock one in which no one had ever been laid it was preparation day and the Sabbath was about to begin the woman who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment on the first day of the week very early in the morning the woman took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb they found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus while they were wondering about this suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them in their fright the woman bowed down with their faces to the ground but the men said to them why do you look for the living among the dead he is not here he is risen remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men be crucified and on the third day raised again then they remembered his words when they came back from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others it was Mary Magdalene Joanna Mary the mother of James and the others with them who told us to the disciples but they did not believe the woman because their words seemed to them like nonsense

Peter however got up and ran to the tomb bending over he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves and he went away wondering to himself what had happened amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us we're going to sing again from psalm 16 and we'll sing from verses 9 to verse 11 in Gaelic I'll read the verses in English because of this my heart is glad and joy shall be expressed even by my glory and my flesh and confidence shall rest because my soul and grave to dwell shall not be left by thee nor wilt thou give thine holy one corruption to see that's a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus thou wilt me show the path of life of joys there is full store before thy face at thy right hand our pleasures evermore these three verses of this psalm we sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing in Gaelic

O pierwszy diyorum ovat Most oh die CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 09] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[37 : 41] Thank you. Thank you. Heavenly Father, we thank you once more for your word and we pray for help. We pray for understanding. We pray for insight. We pray that the Holy Spirit himself, the one who inspired this gospel to be written, would be our teacher for these moments as we study these verses.

Help us to help us to remember that this is no ordinary book. We pray for the words of eternal life.

We pray for the day with those from Lewis with us from the campus.

We pray for every person who is here. We pray for the Lord, we pray for the Lord, we pray for the Lord, we pray for the Lord, we pray for those who are not here as well.

We pray for those who are not here as well. We think of absent places. We think of those who would desire to be here and who spent many years with us in the past and who now are housebound.

And we ask that you would minister to them, Lord, even as they watch and listen at the distance.

And we pray for others who once had an interest in the things of God and who now have no interest whatsoever.

[39 : 34] And we ask, Lord, that you would work in their hearts, that you would awaken their souls and that you would bless them. And we pray for the wee ones as well as we hear them. We pray that you would bless them. We thank you that they are an answer to prayer.

And we ask that they would grow up to know you and to trust you. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I came across about to take my watch off, seeing as that clock's telling me it's

twenty past eleven.

That's a dangerous clock to have in my eyeline. I came across a journal, an online journal this week when I was doing some preparation.

And I'd googled the term good news. And this journal came up. And it was a journal entitled Positive News.

And so they only report positive news. And they write this on their homepage. When much of the media is full of doom and gloom. Instead, Positive News is the first media organisation in the world that is dedicated to quality, independent reporting about what's going right.

[40 : 48] So I scanned through some of their most read articles. They had a section for their most read articles. There were some articles about living in a greener world.

And positive stories about the environment. There were other articles about how to be financially secure. Other articles about just being yourself and following your heart.

And that kind of X-factor theology that you tend to get reported. And I scrolled down through all these kind of articles. And the thing that I noted as I was preparing was that the greatest good news story of all time was not there.

There were various stories with measures of good news. But the greatest good news story of all time was absent.

So what's the greatest good news story of all time? Well, the greatest good news story that was ever told is the story of resurrection. That's the greatest good news story of all time.

[41 : 59] We are conscious this week, even as we've been praying, of so many people who have passed from time into eternity. Our hearts are sore.

There are those who are struggling with grief. But the promise that we're given in the Bible is that because Jesus died and rose, everyone who believes in him has the promise of resurrection. Eternal life. That was Jesus' word to the grieving sisters in John 11. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me.

Though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. And then he says to the sisters, Do you believe this?

And Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, as he reflects on all that Jesus has done, he says, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

[43 : 09] You're still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But, says Paul, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

And in Luke 23, as we head in the direction of Luke 24, Luke, as the Holy Spirit inspires us, he tells us the facts very clearly and very carefully so there can be no doubt about the message that Jesus died and Jesus rose.

You know, that is the gospel. The gospel is not Jesus can make you feel good, though he can.

The gospel is not a testimony of how the touch of Jesus has made my life better. The gospel is news, it's facts, it's historical events.

[44 : 30] The good news is that Jesus left heaven and he came to this world. We'll study that over December. He lived for us perfectly, sinlessly.

He died for us in our place and he rose. So Luke tells that story and Luke introduces us to people that God put in place to verify the truth of the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

So we're going to look at four people, hopefully, in the time that we have. First of all, we hear from Joseph of Arimathea and then Luke tells us about the women who are first on the scene.

Thirdly, we hear about two men who are angels and fourthly, we see the response of the disciples to the news of resurrection. So first of all, Joseph of Arimathea.

Verse 15, now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.

[45 : 50] Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in a rock so that, in which no one had yet been laid.

So first of all, we see Joseph of Arimathea here. Sometimes we find that, you know, people just seem to come out of nowhere at just the right time to do a really important job.

the chairs, for example. I don't know who it was that came forward at just the right time. But because they did, all the people on this side of the building are sitting on chairs and not on the floor. You know, we've all heard the quotation that's usually quoted in football when somebody scores an important goal, cometh the hour, cometh the man. And in this darkest of hours, Joseph of Arimathea he steps forward.

And Luke tells us that he's a member of the council, the Sanhedrin. So he's a man who had great power and great position. He was a man of status, of gravitas, and that meant that he had a lot to lose if he came out as being on the side of Jesus.

[47 : 10] He was a good and upright man, and that was evident in the fact that he hadn't consented to the decision to have Jesus crucified. And Luke tells us that he was waiting for the kingdom of God, which is another way of saying that he was a believer.

And Matthew and John back that up and tell us that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus. John 19 and at verse 38 says, Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders.

So we have this man, Joseph. He's a believer. But no one knows he's a believer. He's under the radar. He's hiding his faith.

But all the secrecy that shrouded the witness of Joseph lifted because he stepped forward after Jesus died.

And he asked Pilate, the most powerful man in that place, for Jesus' body. And that was a risky thing to do.

[48 : 26] The bodies of those who were crucified were not usually carefully taken down from the cross. They were left up on the cross to decay as an example to those who were watching on.

Those who were crucified were not treated with dignity or respect. So Joseph was asking for something that didn't normally happen. And then as Joseph took the body of Jesus down and placed it in a tomb that he paid for with his own money, everyone would know that Joseph was on the Lord's side.

And that's what he did. It's a brave thing that he did, but that's what he did. And the question, I suppose, is what motivated Joseph? Why did he do this? And the answer is, he did it because he was motivated by faith in Jesus and love for him.

for Jesus. That's why he did what he did. Because he believed in Jesus. He was following him and he loved him.

And he loved him. But what Joseph did was crucially important because it confirmed the truth about Jesus. It confirmed two truths.

[49 : 46] One, it confirmed that Jesus really had died. Because it wouldn't take long for the conspiracy theorists to come out and say he didn't really die.

but Joseph, this man who was well respected and was a very measured, considered figure, he came and took the body of Jesus down and he placed it in this tomb that he had bought.

And that verified the fact Jesus really was dead. He hadn't just fainted. He wasn't in some sort of short-term coma. He was dead.

And that's important because if Jesus didn't really die, then the wages of our sin are not yet paid. If Jesus didn't actually die, then you and I are still in our sins.

Because the wages of sin is death. And so, if Jesus didn't die, we have to die. But Jesus did die. And his body was placed in this tomb and it was put at a location that was known.

[51 : 09] And that too was important because as the followers of Jesus went to the tomb where Jesus' dead body had been laid on that Sunday morning, it was there that they learned the second truth about Jesus.

and that is that he rose from the dead and that he was alive. So Joseph, as he steps forward, he steps forward to do this courageous thing out of love for Jesus, out of faith in Christ and Joseph, although he didn't realize it when he did it, he was used to verify the truth about Jesus.

One, that he died for our sin and two, that he raised from the dead. He was raised from the dead. He's alive. And I'm sure when Joseph stepped forward on that day to ask for the body of Jesus, he didn't know what he was doing.

He didn't know that he was fulfilling prophecy. He didn't know that he was the man that was mentioned in Isaiah 53, 9. When Joseph stepped forward, he didn't know that this tomb would be crucial in verifying the resurrection of Jesus.

[52 : 33] but God knew. And God used Joseph's witness as a blessing to so many.

So, the first person that we see who is used to verify the good news that Jesus died for our sin and rose from the dead is Joseph of Arimathea.

He was a secret believer who stepped out of the shadows and stood up for Jesus at exactly the right time.

And I want to just reflect on Joseph's example here and encourage and challenge each of us to follow that example. Maybe there's some of you here and you're believers, but you're secret believers.

Maybe there's some here and over the course of years or months or maybe even days. You've come to faith in Christ, but you know to actually step out and say you're a believer is a costly thing.

[53 : 47] It's a risky thing to do in your school environment, in your work environment, in the home. So the easier thing to do is just stay under the radar.

Don't step forward. Let communion after communion pass you by and you sit on the edge. But the challenge that comes to the life and witness of Joseph is not to be a secret believer, but to step out, to profess your faith in Christ.

And the encouragement for us if we will actually do that is that God can do much more with our lives and our witness and our gifts than we could ever imagine.

We think, what difference would it really make if I speak up for Jesus? I mean, who am I? What influence do I have? What can my little life have in terms of impact?

Well, Joseph could never have expected that out of his tomb, the greatest news story ever told would break forth.

[55 : 03] But that's how God ordered it. So the first person we see is Joseph of Arimathea, as he's used in the telling of the good news of Jesus.

us. The second group of people we see are the women. That takes us to our second point, verse 54. It was preparation day and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The woman who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes, but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the woman took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. We'll pause there for a second.

During the life and the ministry of Jesus and now at the time of the death of Jesus, what we see is that women are being given a place of particular honor.

[56 : 12] And that was completely counter to the culture of that day. But God's ordaining of things was that the very first people to witness the empty tomb would not be the disciples, but it would be these women.

And we see that these women, they'd been at the cross, they'd watched Jesus die, they were closer to Jesus than any of the disciples had been as he hung on the cross and as he died.

And then they tracked the movements of Joseph, they'd watched as Joseph had gone and asked for Jesus' body, they'd seen as the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, they followed the tracks of Joseph as he laid the body of Jesus in the tomb that had been prepared.

And the women, they did this because they wanted to know where the body of Jesus could be found so that when the Sabbath day was over, they could go to the tomb.

And so on the Sabbath day they rested, which must have been incredibly hard for them. And then first thing on Sunday morning, they go to the tomb of Jesus.

[57 : 43] Now the question we have to ask is why did they do that? I mean, did the women expect to find that the tomb would be empty and that Jesus was risen?

Well, clearly they didn't expect that. They came with spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus. That's what they expected.

They expected to find the dead body of Jesus. And the reason they came to the tomb was simply because they loved Jesus.

They hadn't remembered about the resurrection. They didn't believe that Jesus would be risen at that point. They expected to find his body dead and laid in that place that had first been laid.

But the reason they went there was simply because they loved Jesus. They're puzzled. They're bewildered. They don't know what's really happening. But they love Jesus and so they go to the place where his body was laid.

[58 : 51] And I think there's a lesson there that we can draw an application. You know, in our Christian experience, there are sometimes when we just don't understand very much.

these women wouldn't have understood very much about what was going on at this point. And sometimes we can identify with that. Sometimes we just, we can't see what God is doing.

There's hardly a week that passes when I don't speak with someone who says, I don't understand what's happening in life. I can't see why God has allowed this to happen.

I can't see what God is doing. I can't understand what's going on here. And that's where the women were at. They didn't understand why they'd had to watch Jesus die.

They didn't understand why God had allowed the body of Jesus to be laid in this tomb.

[59 : 57] They didn't understand and they couldn't see what was coming next. But they went to the place where Jesus' body was laid because they loved Jesus.

And sometimes, you know, that's all we have. Sometimes the only reason that we keep on keeping on is simply because we love Jesus.

We can't understand his ways. We can't understand what's going on. But we do love him. I think that was the heart of these women.

So what happened next? Verse 2. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

And that leaves them in a state of wonder, of bewilderment, of alarm, of being afraid, which is all very understandable because they're the first to realize that the Jesus they saw die, the Jesus that they expected to find in the tomb, he wasn't there.

[61 : 16] So they don't know what to think. But the greatest news ever is just about to break. And because they loved the Lord, because they went to the place where the Lord's body had been laid, they're going to be the first to hear it.

James 4.8 says, draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Matthew 7.7, Jesus says, seek and you will find.

And these women, they're a great example to us. They can't fathom what's going on, but they don't stay at home in despair.

They drew near to Jesus. They went seeking Jesus, and because they did, they were the first to find him, and they were the first to hear the greatest news story that ever would break.

Jesus was risen. And they hear that news story through the messengers from heaven, the angels, and we'll come to them next.

[62 : 36] But let's just not overlook the example these women set. you know, if you want to know God, if you and I want to know God better, then we're to seek him.

to come closer to God, and know more of his presence, more of his blessing, more spiritual reality, then we're to draw near to him.

We're to make an effort to be near to him, as the woman did. So we see Joseph, and we see the woman.

Are you still with me? Does anybody need to stand up? There's only one that needs to stand up over there, but I'll leave you to sit just now. Thirdly, we come to the angels. While the women were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. And these men were told elsewhere in the other gospels that they were angels. In their fright, verse 5, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, why do you look for the living among the dead?

[64 : 08] And that's when the cogs in the mines start to turn. The angels, they're sent on their special mission from heaven to that place.

They intercept the women. The women are bewildered. They're grieving. They're confused. They don't know what's going on. And the angels, they meet them with a question.

And they say, why do you look for the living among the dead? dead? Why are you moping around in this tomb? Why do you expect to find Jesus' body dead in this grave?

Why are you behaving as if Jesus was not alive? That's the question that comes to them. And that's a question that perhaps has to come to some of us today.

Maybe there are some here in the building. Maybe there are others who are watching at a distance and you have questions about Jesus. And so you pick up a Bible and you start to look through the Bible and you're looking at the Bible as if it was just any other textbook off a library shelf.

[65 : 28] And then you're on to YouTube and you're watching videos, documentaries, the Discovery Channel and all kinds of things about Jesus. And you're looking back on Jesus as one who died.

And yes, Jesus did die. But he rose from the dead. And he lives.

And if you and I want to know Jesus, we need to look for him, not among the dead gurus of the past, but rather we need to look for him as the living saviour of the present.

So this question was designed to show the woman that Jesus was not dead. And as they're thinking about that, and as that is registering, the angels follow up with them with that clear good news that Jesus was risen.

verse 6, they say to the woman as they're scratching their heads, he is not here, he is risen.

Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again.

[66 : 48] Then they remembered his words. And it was at that point that the doubt cleared.

And it was at that point that the fears were swept away, and the confusion lifts, and the joy breaks in, and the realization dawns.

they're not going to need these spices, because the Jesus that they loved and trusted was alive.

Now what is it that caused the woman to be taken from doubt and fear to faith and joy?

Well, it was the word of Jesus. it wasn't that they had an experience with some supernatural celestial beings.

[68 : 00] It wasn't that that got through to them. When the doubts lifted, and when the fears were swept away, it was because they remembered the words of Jesus.

Jesus, the angels were the ones that helped them to remember the words of Jesus, but as they remembered that word, and as they applied the word of God to everything that they were seeing in this empty tomb, the grave clothes folded up, the place empty, and then they're hearing the word of Jesus, they're remembering the word of Jesus, and at that point, they understood, and the message of resurrection penetrated their heads, and it touched their hearts, and it exploded from within them, and it was because of the word of Jesus, and for us, we constantly need to remember the words of Jesus, you know, I keep saying this, I can't say it enough, we continually need to be in the word of God, there's no magic in the chairs, there's no special fairy dust that we need to get hold of, this is what makes the difference, we can need to continually be in the word of God, that's where we'll get spiritual vision, you won't get spiritual vision off

YouTube, you won't get spiritual vision off endless apps in our phones, we won't get spiritual vision from some experience that's fleeting in some highly charged meeting, we get spiritual vision, our doubts and our fears evaporate, they are dealt with as we take time to be in and to remember the words of Jesus, so the message of heaven through the angels was not just to these women on that day, it's a message that comes to us, we must remember to be in the word of God.

Young folks, the best advice you can be given at this stage in your life is to be in the word of God.

Every day, every evening, put your phones down, take time to be in the word of God.

[70 : 36] If we are to come to realize the good news about Jesus, if we are to be saved, if we are to be those who are kept steady and bright as followers of Christ, we cannot skimp on the word of God.

And that's the message that the angels brought to the women. They reminded them of the word of Jesus as the news of the resurrection dawned on them.

And finally, just very briefly, the disciples, which is a bit of an anticlimax really. When they came back to the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven disciples and to all the others.

Verse 9, it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told us to the apostles. We can just imagine the women absolutely bursting with joy, amazed at what they'd seen, thrilled with this news that had been first entrusted to them.

They charged back to the place where they knew the disciples were. They tell them about the empty tomb. They tell them about the angels. They tell them about the word of Jesus that they'd remembered.

[72 : 00] And what would the response be? Well, we'll come to that in a minute. But first of all, just note that we know that the women believed because they told these things to the eleven and all the others.

We shouldn't miss that. real faith, it can be hidden for a while, as it was in the life of Joseph.

It can sometimes be marred by doubts and fears, as it was in the lives of the women. But real faith eventually will come out and it will be seen and it will be heard.

Real faith, faith in Jesus, it must be personal. But it must not be private. If we believe that Jesus died and rose for us, we must tell that good news to other people.

people. Here's a challenging question. When did you last tell somebody about Jesus? Not about church, not that you went to a Scaldale camp for a weekend and you did orienteering or whatever.

[73 : 23] When did you and I last share with somebody the good news about Jesus? Jesus. Because if we believe it, we will tell it.

That's the test. If you want to know whether you believe or not, consider this, when did you last tell somebody? And even though you do tell people, don't expect that they'll always believe because when the woman told us to the disciples, the response was not encouraging.

verse 11, they did not believe the woman because their words seemed to them like nonsense. And you feel like saying to Luke, why did you have to put such a dampener over things?

Why do we have to come to the end of the section this way? And the truth is because that's the way it happened. And this is how we know the Bible is trustworthy.

If you were writing this as a work of fiction, you wouldn't make the woman the main witnesses because the testimony of the woman in that culture, in that day, it didn't even stand up in court.

[74 : 43] A woman couldn't testify in court because her word was not considered to be reliable and yet God determined he would make the woman the first witnesses. That's what happened. And if this was not the truth, you certainly wouldn't portray the disciples this way.

The disciples are the ones who are going to be given the job of taking the gospel everywhere. And yet, the first thing we see about the disciples is that they doubt the resurrection.

They don't get it. They don't get it. Peter, however, verse 11, verse 12, sorry, got up and ran to the tomb.

Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves and he went away wondering to himself what had happened. And that's what we finish today.

We see Peter there, still scarred, from his denial of Jesus. Standing in an open grave, with the grave clothes in his hands, and wondering, hoping, perhaps somewhat fearful, saying to himself, could this actually be true?

[76 : 14] and then the camera cuts. So there's Luke's account of the greatest good news story ever told, the truth that Jesus died to pay the wages of our sin and Jesus rose to secure eternal life for all who will believe.

And Luke is asking the question of Theophilus as his gospel comes to an end. Theophilus, do you believe yet? Do you believe and God the Holy Spirit through Luke is asking us today, do you believe?

Do you believe that Jesus died and rose to save you? And if you do believe, will you go and tell us to other people?

Because this is the news that people need to hear. We'll pray. Lord, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the greatest good news story ever told. The truth that Jesus died to pay the wages of our sin and Jesus rose to give everlasting life to all who believe.

[78 : 07] Help us to believe we pray and help us to tell this message for Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll sing to finish and we'll sing the words on the screen.

We sing about the God whom we trust. My God is the ancient of days. ■■■ and Though the nations rage, kingdom rise and fall, then it's still one king, reign over all.

So I will not fear, for this goodly name is, that my God is the Ancient of Days.

None above Him, none before Him, all of time in His hands, for His throne shall remain and ever stand.

All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

[79 : 37] Though the dread of night overwhelms my soul, He is here with me, I am not alone, for His love is sure, and He knows my name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

None above Him, none before Him, all of time in His hands, on His throne it shall remain and ever stand.

All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

Though I may not see what the future brings, I will watch and wait for the Savior come, then my joy come paid, standing face to face, in the presence of the Ancient of Days.

None above Him, none before Him, all of time in His hands, for His throne it shall remain and ever stand.

[81 : 13] All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

For my God is the Ancient of Days. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.