

A six year old boy drowns in a dam on his family property. Public buildings become temporary morgues in response to the mounting death toll from the Covid 19 virus. A young man trapped in his car in rising floodwaters drowns before rescuers reach him. Six precious parishioners die in the last twelve months. Dead livestock wash up on beaches and river banks. Fresh flowers wither and die. Endangered species no longer endangered because they disappear. Abiding characteristic of our world: death and decay. Death and decay entering the world through the conscious decision of the first man, Adam. Its spread dramatically captured in the Bible, the earliest recorded human history. Revealed in the record of Adam's early family tree. Like a tolling bell, eight times, *'then he died'*. Death and decay, an ancient, continuous cycle. Human beings have a complex relationship with death. Enemy to be feared, fought. Welcome friend embraced. Solution promoted in answer to problems. Human beings develop all sorts of myths about death. Natural part of the life cycle. Descent into nothingness. Doorway to a better place where good people go and bad people don't. The problem with death. It doesn't go away. We are too weak to defeat or sideline it. Death and decay, the abiding characteristic of our world. The Bible nails it when it describes death as the last enemy. Brothers and sisters, how do you understand death? What is your solution to the hovering presence of death? The word from God about death. It is not the end of the story. A glimpse tucked away amongst the *'then he died'* of Adam's nine generations of descendants. *'Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.'*

Genesis 5:22 God's word to us on this Easter Sunday morning. Poured out like a blazing light of glory, hope. The great reversal of April 5th 33 AD. The most likely date for the events we celebrate today. The great reversal. The dead man Jesus. Killed by the hands of crucifixion experts. Buried in a sealed tomb by a wealthy, secret follower. Risen from the grave. Ending the ultimate three-day lock down. Breaking the chains of death. You heard the story twice this morning. From the pen of Mark, the lips of Peter. Mark an ear witness. Not an eye witness. His source, most likely Peter. Today's passages reveal three things about the great reversal. **First**, God's doing. Humanity introduces, perpetuates the cycle of death and decay. God reverses it. What a gracious and mighty God we have. The testimony of Peter, *'They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day'* **Acts 10:39b-40a** Mark's account starkly reminds us: the great reversal an unexpected surprise to even Jesus' most

loyal followers. The two Marys and Salome, in a beautiful act of devotion, go to the tomb to anoint the dead, decaying body of Jesus. Sisters and brothers, humanity proves itself utterly incapable of breaking the damaging cycle of death. The resurrection of Jesus shouts out: the living God brings the dead back to life. Christians stake everything on the resurrection of Jesus. If it is true, and it is, the inevitable cycle of death and decay reversed. If it is false, we Christians are fools and our faith is in vain. **Second**, God's revelation. Any knowledge of this great reversal comes solely from the revelation of God. The empty tomb tells us nothing more than Jesus' body has disappeared. God reveals in word and action what the empty tomb means. Without God's revelation we would be none the wiser. God's revelatory word via heavenly messenger. *As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.'* **v5-6** On a given date, in a defined place, God raised the dead Jesus to life. Releasing him from the sealed tomb. God's revelatory action explained by Peter, *'[God] caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.'* **Acts 10:40b-41** The disciples didn't go looking for the risen Jesus. He's dead and buried. God brings the great reversal to their attention. Outside the tomb, on the road to Emmaus, in the upper room, on the beach. God caused Jesus to be seen alive in bodily form. Ghosts or inner spiritual experiences don't eat and drink with you. Brothers and sisters, the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is overwhelming. But unless God reveals it. Unless people respond to the revelation with saving faith. There will only be blindness to the great reversal. So, pray sisters and brothers for God's revelation for those still blind to the truth and implications of the resurrection of Jesus. Reg Neal prayed regularly for his dear friend, Tony Morphet, a prominent atheistic journalist, TV script writer. This is Tony's testimony. *'What I was reading wasn't legend; it wasn't naturalistic fiction, it was reporting...I found myself face to face with the evidence of what happened when God invaded time in the flesh of a man...A large proportion of it dealing with the trial, and execution and – worst of all – the rising from the dead of this man Jesus. And I really didn't want to know that. It smashed a hole in my ceiling and showed me the sky, and the sight of that frightening depth forced me to my knees, which was not an attitude which had ever appealed to me.'* **Third**, God's purpose. More than breaking the

cycle of death and decay. Unveiling Jesus as Judge and Saviour. Peter says of the risen Jesus, *'He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. Acts 10:42* We live in a moral universe. Accountable to our Creator. Giving account before the Judge of all. To do so on our own with only the record of our lives a horrifying prospect. But **Acts 10:43** says, *All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'* Forgiveness. Won for us on the Cross. The God given means of acquittal on the day of judgement. The God given path to reconciliation with him. Life after death in eternity with him. A glimpse in what is yet to take place for the deserting, denying, doubting disciples. A reconciling encounter with the Risen Lord. Listen to the words of the angel to the women inside the empty tomb, *But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'* **v7** Brothers and sisters, the implications of this great reversal bigger than I have time to cover. The resurrection of Jesus means nothing is ever the same again. I think the women looking into the empty tomb sort of got that. Shaken to the core. Confronted by the impossible. Standing on the edge of eternity. Looking at a future that belongs to God. A future gifted to them and us through trusting submission to the risen Lord. As beneficiaries of the resurrection, our understanding of God, ourselves, the world transformed. What happened to Jesus will happen to us. The bodies of those who die in Christ will be raised. Transformed. Brought into the resurrection fullness of all we are meant to be Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. Death has lost its sting. Our labour in the Lord is not in vain. We are born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Praise God. Alleluia. Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed.