

Homily Easter Day 2024 Great Wishford and BSJ
Isaiah 25: 6-9 Acts 10: 34-43 Mark 16:1-8

THE JOY OF AN EMPTY TOMB

Does anyone else feel as if Easter has come round quite quickly this year? I know it is early but only by 10 days or so. But this sense of the cycle of the Christian life made me think about how the meanings and messages of these great festivals can remain fresh and inspiring every year. I hope to show how Mark's gospel helps us with this..

Has anyone had or is anyone expecting to get an EGG today??
And what might that EGG be made of?
I wonder Why do we have eggs on easter day?

One reason is of course, they point to New Life – an egg holds a chick, new life!

What was in *your* egg?

Well, mine was empty! I must say I was a bit disappointed..
all that wrapping and excitement, and an empty egg...

It was dark inside and full of promise but there was nothing in it... it should have held something special and delicious but,,, nothing. Just hollow.

It reminded me a bit of our gospel story today and the two Marys in our reading - they were disappointed but they were

looking for something far far more important than some chocolate.

They were looking for Jesus, who had died 2 days before and whose body needed the traditional washing and anointing. And they loved Jesus very much so you can imagine slightly how they felt. They were devastated.

But WE know that the empty tomb wasn't a disaster, that the empty tomb is actually far far better and more promising than a tomb with Jesus in it, because we know what happened next. We have the benefit of hindsight and of knowing more about Christianity, which has been growing, despite what you read in the papers.., ever since that first Easter day.

Actually Jesus' tomb wasn't quite empty, there was a man there dressed in white, I think he sounds a bit like an angel, and he spoke and told the women that Jesus has been raised! Not been stolen, or had 'never died', but raised to life! Raised by the power of God's love.

The women were told to tell the disciples that that Jesus was going to Galilee, and will meet them there. He told them that Jesus had gone ahead of them, that he will be there when they get there. I wonder if they remembered that this is what Jesus promised would happen.. Jesus said, only a few days before, 'When I am raised I will go before you to Galilee'...

Why Galilee?

Galilee was where it all began – the place Jesus' ministry started, where he called his disciples, where he healed, where he forgave sins, told parables, where he fed thousands of hungry people.... Jesus has gone back to where it all began.

It is like a cycle - at this new beginning Jesus takes his disciples back to where it started, but the disciples are different now. They know Jesus better, they know themselves better and they can see what Jesus's life of healing, forgiveness and teaching shows them about God, and how God's kingdom works.

And it is the same for us.

Each time we celebrate Easter, it has the same message of new life and hope after Jesus overcomes death, but it means something new to us, something new for this year because we have learnt and grown since last year. And how will we change in the coming year I wonder?

What will Easter mean to us in 2025? What will we learn about Jesus and about how we can follow him in the meantime? This is something to ponder as we move through this year...

Now, importantly, after all the anticipation, Easter does not end today. In fact Easter points to a new beginning. We too can start again, but start from a different place.

And Mark reminds us that Jesus has gone before us. Each time we read the details of Jesus' life, each time we encounter him and meet challenges in our faith and in our lives, we can know he will be with us. He goes before us, back to where it started and teaches us something new each time.

This is how Mark's gospel can help us live as Easter Christians. This is how the Easter message of the empty tomb and the risen Christ can remain fresh and joyful because each time we get here, we are different from the last time, so it means something new and renewing, and exciting.

And this is not just for us, but as we heard in our New Testament reading, this is for people of all nations; all people, anywhere, who read the Good News of Jesus Christ can learn what it means to be forgiven, to experience the rich feast and freedom from fears and tears of which Isaiah prophecies.

SO, as we eat our eggs and whatever's inside them, let us start our new cycle today, reflecting on what we know about God and his Son, and where we are on our personal and collective journeys. Let's keep learning about him and about ourselves, so bit by bit we are transformed into the people he created us to be.

For on that day it will be said
Lo This is OUR GOD – let us be glad and rejoice in the salvation he offers us (Isaiah 25:9).