**Easter Sunday – 4th April 2021**

John 20: 1-9

Matthew 28: 16-20

I have chosen to read John’s account of the resurrection. Although all four gospels record the event they are all very different to each other.

John’s account is the only one that records only Mary Magdalene going to the tomb – all other accounts say “women” with one naming two women and another naming three and with different names. However in John’s gospel, later in Mary’s account to Simon Peter she does say “*we* don’t know where they have put him”, so it is implied that there were others with her.

John states that Mary found the stone in front of the tomb removed. Luke and Mark mention angels appearing to the women, sitting in the tomb, before they return to the disciples. John only reports an angel after the two male disciples had left the tomb. Matthew is the only gospel to mention any guards stationed at the tomb. In his version when the angel appeared there was an earthquake and the guards were so frightened by his appearance that they became like dead men!

Although the accounts differ it does not mean that they are contradicting each other or that one is a truer account than another – it simply means that the authors were placing more importance on one happening than another because of who they were writing to and for what purpose. All four gospels were written for different purposes.

All the accounts agree that the tomb was empty – the absolute point of paramount importance, *for everyone*, is reported in the same way by all of them.

Another point that all authors agree is that the women were the first to witness the empty tomb. This is significant. In the first century women were ineligible to be legal witnesses so if the accounts were being written to promote a myth they would have reported that men had witnessed the events. The fact that God chose to reveal the empty tomb and news of the resurrection to women first reveals that He does not distinguish between their value and purpose compared with a man. As I mention, Jesus does not do the expected!

Mary reports “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb”, but there is no mention of who she supposed “they” to be and no expansion on what the reason for that would have been. Matthew categorically states that the guards had been stationed at the tomb in response to the pleas of the chief priests and Pharisees that the disciples may try to steal the body to credit the claim that Jesus had made that He would rise again (rebuild the temple) in three days.

In John’s account, the first thing that Simon Peter and John did was to run to the tomb to see the tomb first-hand. Does this return to the belief that women would not count as witnesses as explained before? Perhaps the women who would have been experiencing severe shock were not explaining things clearly? Or is it simply human nature?

When we hear something incredible, don’t we want to witness and experience it too?

Despite the fact that Jesus so often repeats that we should trust Him, He remains always gracious. In this instance the grave clothes were in the tomb to be found – the strips of linen laying on the floor and head cloth, neatly folded. If the body had been taken, who would have taken the time to fold the material? And seamless garments were a precious item (hence why the guards at the crucifixion threw lots for Jesus’ robe), so a grave robber would probably have taken that.

It says that it was seeing this that made John believe. Although OT scripture had pointed to Jesus, and the many times Jesus had tried to tell the disciples what would happen, they had still not completely understood. It was the sight of the empty tomb and the neat cloth that cemented the whole meaning for John.

In the gospels of Luke and John, detail is provided in some depth concerning the several appearances of Christ afterwards; Matthew and Mark simply mention that He appeared with very little detail added.

Matthew 28 goes straight to the Great Commission Jesus gave to His disciples, to His followers at that time and also in the future – that means *US*.

This brings me to the eggs that are around the church. The chocolate Easter egg that I showed should taste lovely (I will tell you later!) – but there is not much nutrition to it (despite my argument that cocoa beans are beans so count as one of our five a day!). Likely to cause us dental problems too.

Real eggs though may not look as inviting if shown to a child as they are. But we know that they are full of protein and goodness – as with every analogy there will be limitations, so anyone vegan or allergic may not completely agree, but the principle will be the same. Eggs are extremely versatile. They can be eaten for breakfast, dinner or tea. They can be eaten alone or else accompanied by something. For me personally, I seldom eat just an egg, it will have a companion!

An egg can be boiled, either hard for picnics or soft for dipping in soldiers. It can be scrambled, it can be made into an omelette, fried, coddled, poached. Must admit I have never grilled an egg and not sure how that would work – limitations!

It can be used as a glaze when baking pastry, used as a glue to hold breadcrumbs onto something you are breadcrumbing! You could use it in baking a cake. Is that enough examples?

Whether you love them, hate them or intolerant to them, you cannot deny that eggs are versatile.

Matthew records Jesus as saying “Go and make disciples of all nations……..teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”. He does not say “go and preach to everyone you meet” and he does not say “Some of you go”. He is telling all of us that we have to bring the good news of Jesus, His victory through the cross and resurrection, to everyone. To re-iterate that through His sacrifice we have new life by being in close relationship with our Father in heaven.

We will all have different strengths and ways of communicating, but I would encourage all of us to be as versatile as an egg to find ways of sharing the truth of Jesus in a way that will be relevant to the person we are speaking with. Or it may even be through actions - using an egg to bake a cake for our neighbour perhaps?

Please do help yourself to some eggs – and enjoy any chocolate ones that you may have!