

## The body of Christ

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen

This morning, the three readings answer the question; What happened to the crucified body of Jesus body after it was buried and sealed in the tomb?

**Now on the first day of the week, Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark,**

Instead of saying *three days later, as in three days after Jesus' crucifixion*: John introduces the phrase, *The first day of the week*, or Sunday as some translations state. This change in literary style was to indicate something new was happening.

"**The first day of the week**", also engaged the original hearers and led them to a new reality. Of course, the new fact was being revealed; the tomb was empty.

**Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.**

Mary's reaction was to tell the disciples, so she ran to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple whom we know to be John. Mary's line of thought at this stage was Jesus' tomb had been violated by grave robbers as she said:

**"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."**

Can you imagine how the anguish of Mary had massively increased? Not only did she witness the crucifixion of Jesus and the subsequent burial in the tomb – Now the tomb was empty!

We read how both disciples went to investigate what Mary had reported to them. They sought to understand – what happened to the body of Jesus? Has Jesus tomb been violated by grave robbers as suggested?

Everyone who reads the empty tomb's account is required to address this question seriously; *Why was the tomb empty?* Was it grave robbers? What does the evidence reveal?

**Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; <sup>5</sup>and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the**

**linen cloths lying,<sup>7</sup> and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.**

Peter and John found the tomb of Jesus empty. But was it the work of grave robbers, as suggested? The following text sheds some light that can assist us in understanding: John 19:38-40

**After this, Joseph of Arimathe'a, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So, he came and took away his body.<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight.<sup>40</sup> They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.**

Joseph & Nicodemus used expensive spices on the body of Jesus for burial. Where as the corpse had no monetary value. If there had been grave robbers, it is only logical they would not have left such valuable items behind. The whole concept of the tomb was empty because of grave robbers can be rightly dismissed.

What other explanation for the tomb being empty?

**<sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.**

Something happened that caused Peter and John both to believe – believe what? – they would have dismissed that the missing body of Jesus was due to grave robbers – yet what did they believe?

**<sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.**

Nevertheless, Peter & John believed God's hand must be in this event even though the question of where the body of Jesus Christ is was a mystery.

Let us return to Mary: After Mary had reported to Peter and John and was even more perplexed when she went to the place of the tomb in her grief.

**Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb;** Whilst she was there – the Risen Lord Jesus revealed himself to her. The tomb was empty – because Jesus had risen from the dead.

Now we turn to the reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

**We are witnesses to all that Jesus did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;<sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest;<sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were**

**chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.**

Peter reveals how the resurrected Jesus appeared to him, including the other disciples and many other witnesses, and including when the Resurrected Jesus commissioned the Disciples to preach the Good News. Peter did encounter the resurrected Jesus.

These encounters with the resurrected Jesus were their understanding of the empty tomb and the folded grave clothes. They now experienced and believed that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. They testified this was no ghost or spirit, as the resurrected Jesus ate and drank with them.

The resurrection made sense of Mary's testimony when she returned to Peter and John a second time after they had already investigated and found the tomb empty. Mary testified Jesus was no longer dead but alive. Jesus had been raised from death. Peter lead the other disciples as they all obeyed the

**Risen Saviour:**

**<sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."**

**Forgiveness of Sin through His name:**

Let me explain this fundamental Biblical and theological truth, forgiveness, through his name.

At the cross – Jesus exchanges his righteousness with us, who are considered unrighteous by our very nature. We become clothed in His grace. Jesus became clothed in our sinfulness. That was the exchange he made at the cross.

When the Son of God died, he became the lamb of God, the atoning sacrifice, and took away the world's sin.

Jesus is the true lamb of God. The Risen and ascended Jesus stands ready to give forgiveness to all who turn to him. To all who acknowledges him as the Son of God, Jesus will grant the blessing of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Peter and the other disciples also proclaimed that the Risen Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

The other set reading for today is Colossians 3:1-4. This text has implications for all of us who belong to Christ. We who have sought forgiveness and acknowledge that our reconciliation comes through the Cross of Christ. The Empty tomb indicates, God has raised the Son.

**3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

This Easter, how is verse two a reality in both your life and mine? How is this verse a reality in the life of the Parish of St John's Gordon? **<sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.**

Like the original disciples of Christ, we are also called to proclaim; to our world the message of the empty tomb.

#### **Romans 6:9**

**For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.**

In a moment, we will affirm our baptismal promise: as we celebrate the resurrection of the LORD Jesus Christ, we remember that we too will rise with him when our time on earth is over.

**To God be glory forever. Amen**