

**1 Cor. 15:19-26** – *To doubt the resurrection is to lose what it promises us*

**The first Adam's legacy made us born to die; the Second Adam changed the curse to the blessing of new life in Him.**

19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

*"Most to be pitied" – if Christians, subject to persecution and deprivation, are believing a lie.*

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

*"Christ has indeed been raised" – Christianity is essentially a resurrection faith.*

*"Firstfruits" – the first harvest sheaf was dedicated to the Lord. Jesus' resurrection begins the promised new creation, Isa. 43:18-19; 65:17; 66:22; Jesus is the "firstborn from the dead" (Rev. 1:5).*

21-22 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

*"In Adam all die" – all Adam's descendants, i.e. mankind, suffer death but "in Christ all will be made*

*alive". All "in Christ" i.e. knowing Him by faith, have new life now and eternally at the resurrection.*

• **For further study**, see 1 Cor. 5:25; Romans 5:17-18; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:6.

23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him.

*"Each in turn." Christ was raised in his own time in history (c. AD 30), and those who know Christ by faith will be raised at his second coming. His resurrection is the pledge that ours will follow.*

24 Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

25-26 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

*"He must reign" – underlines the unshakable divine plan that history ends in triumph over all evil, including the last enemy, death, with God's people reigning with Christ forever, 1 Tim. 2:12.*

**IN PRACTICE** There's quite a lot of emphasis on death in this passage - and that on the day that's all about Jesus' resurrection to life and new life for those who choose to put their trust in Jesus. Why? Because our pathway into new life, and life eternal, has to be through our personal surrender, identifying with Jesus as the Son of God. And a bit more.... even the devil knows and believes who Jesus is. But the hold he has on us is our sin. Do we see ourselves as 'miserable sinners' and 'miserable offenders' as the Book of Common Prayer puts it? That is our relationship with Adam, and if that is how we see ourselves, that in all likelihood is how we will live. On the other hand the more we know that we are restored offenders and among 'all the saints' that the NT letters are addressed to, we will live up to that, more or less. That is a new relationship, with the New Adam.

**QUESTION** *We were dying, because "in Adam all die" but how confident are we in saying we are numbered with those who "in Christ are made alive"? How would we explain this changed relationship to someone exploring Christian faith?*

**PRAYER** Lord Jesus, at this special time of year when we reflect at length on Your sacrifice, we thank You that You are always making the offer for us to "believe and receive". We are sorry for all the times and ways we have tried to earn it, perform it, justify it, or assume it, when what you ask of us is our simple decision of faith. We surrender all our own strategies and attempts as we turn to You alone - to see You, believe You, and with joy receive forgiveness of sins in Your name. Amen.

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# The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, April 21, 2019 with commentary notes

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **April 21** in Bible order

*Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand - read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching*

**Easter Sunday. Theme: Jesus makes us the offer to believe and receive**

John 20:1-18 – The story of the first to see and believe the resurrection

Acts 10:34-43 – The first Roman household believes and receives

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 – To doubt the resurrection is to lose what it promises us

## John 20:1-18 – *The story of the first to see and believe the resurrection*

**Mary Magdalene unexpectedly encounters the risen Jesus, who speaks to her.**

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

*"While it was still dark" -- Mary was not from Jerusalem but had seen where Jesus had been laid, Mark 15:47. As a close friend and committed follower, she set off to find the tomb in the not-yet light, to complete the burial.*

2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

*"Running to Simon Peter" - despite his denials he was looked to as the natural leader.*

*"We don't know..." -- Mary may not have set off on her own.*

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

4-5 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

*"The other disciple" -- a way of rendering a first person account by John.*

*"Bent over" -- tomb entrances were low, excavated no larger than necessary.*

6-7 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

*"Saw the strips of linen lying there" – the implication is that the linen retained the shape of the body it had wrapped, with the head wrapping separate.*

*"Head... cloth... lying in its place" -- more explicit in other versions e.g. NLT "rolled up (entulisso) in a place by itself". A grave robber would have stolen the valuable linen, or left it disorderly.*

8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

*"He saw and believed" – the disciples did not make up a story about resurrection to fit their expectations, because they did not have that expectation, despite Jesus' patient preparation of them.*

9-10 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

*"Did not understand from Scripture" – e.g. Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10–12; Hosea 6:2, not easy for them to grasp, more clear to us with hindsight.*

11-12 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

*"Two angels in white" – angels often appeared in pairs and in white, Acts 1:10, Ezekiel 9:2; Daniel 10:5–6; Rev. 15:6.*

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

*"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him."*

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking He was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him."

**IN PRACTICE** Mary experienced a deep sense of loss, before becoming the first to see the risen Lord and have the privilege of conveying this reality to others. Sometimes we are not yet seeing what God is showing us, because we have not yet let go of what we were secure in. God opens a new window showing Him at work – when we agree we really need to see this different picture, to be aware of the relationship with Him which brings new life.

**QUESTION** *How much do you admit your need to see Jesus in a new way, in this resurrection season?*

### Acts 10:34-43 – The first Roman household believes and receives

#### **Peter's earlier vision leads him to share the life events of the Lord with them**

*Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman officer stationed in Caesarea, had a visitation from angel who told him to send to Joppa, 30 miles down the coast, for a man called Simon Peter to come back and speak to them.*

*"The gardener" – gardeners often started work early before the heat of the day.*

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

*"Rabboni" – rather than 'Rabbi', a more familiar form, "my teacher".*

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.' "

*"I have not yet ascended" – there was more time for further appearances before the Ascension. Then the fellowship would take a different form, John 20:22.*

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that He had said these things to her.

*"Mary... went... with the news" – It is remarkable in that culture, when women were disregarded, that Jesus appeared first to a woman, who became the bearer of news to the others.*

*Meanwhile Peter had a vision which turned upside down his perception of non-Jews as impure, and a strong prompting to go with the Gentile visitors who appeared at that moment.*

34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God

does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.

*"God does not show favouritism" – God's impartiality was a common thought in Judaism, but for Peter it took a vision from God to open his mind to God's acceptance of non-Jews.*

36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

*"The good news of peace" – in these verses Peter summarises events as Mark's gospel did later, from John the Baptist's announcement to the post-resurrection appearances. Mark's gospel is widely thought to be a compilation of Peter's preached messages.*

37-38 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.

*"You know" – Peter assumes knowledge of the events in Jerusalem surrounding the crucifixion and the resurrection to life of Jesus in this outlying area of the Roman province.*

39-40 "We are witnesses of everything

**IN PRACTICE** This story, with Peter's vision that preceded it (Acts 10:3ff) is a turning point of the greatest importance. God loves those who are not like us and may not hold our values or customs – and He is out to reach them with His love. Our story might be the starting point of what becomes their story, if we are willing to let go of our prejudices (we all have them!) and widen our horizons with His help. God did not appear to these Gentile seekers – He absolutely relied on Peter's willingness to be His vessel to bring the reality of Jesus to them.

**QUESTION** *Unlike Peter, we cannot say that we are witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. What is our way of telling our story in a way which raises faith for others?*

He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

*"We are witnesses (v.39) ...seen... by witnesses" – Peter emphasises how the apostles were close companions of Jesus and witnessed his life, the manner of His death, and the reality of His resurrection.*

*"Hanging Him on a cross" – literally 'on a tree', a metaphor for crucifixion recalling Deuteronomy 21:22-23*

41 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.

42 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.

43 All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."

*"Everyone who believes... receives" – the heart of the gospel truth, which Cornelius' household joyfully accepted in the story's continuation.*