

## Easter 2020 Reflection – The Stone (Matt 28)

‘He has risen from the dead.’ Those words spoken by the angel in Matthew fill our hearts with joy again today. So much of life seems uncertain at the moment, but here in this glorious phrase we find something permanent, unchanging, a timeless truth that changed the world, and still changes it.

The women had got up early and went to the tomb, and there they found the stone rolled away. Stones play an unexpectedly important part in the story of Lent and Easter. After all, who notices stones? They’re just *there*. We walk on them, try not to stub our toes on them, and some of us even try to climb them. But one of the wonders of God is how he uses even the simple, boring things for his glory. Even stones!

The first important encounter with a stone we tell early in the journey of the Lent cross. Jesus is in the desert, and the devil comes to tempt him: ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ And Jesus replies: ‘You shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from God.’ **Jesus takes a temptation and turns it on its head. He points us back to the power of God’s word.**

That’s just what we see at the empty tomb too. When the angel speaks with the women, he (or she) reminds them: He has risen, ‘just as he said’. *The resurrection is the place where the word of God finds its greatest fulfilment.* And many of us in this season of isolation are recovering a fresh love for the Word of God – may that word speak to our hearts again today.

The second encounter comes on Palm Sunday. Jesus has just entered Jerusalem as King, and the crowds are shouting praise. The religious leaders don’t like this very much and tell people to be quiet. ‘I tell you the truth’ Jesus replies, ‘if they keep quiet the stones themselves will cry out!’ **This time Jesus takes a telling off and turns it on its head. He points them, and us, back to the power of worship.**

That’s just what we see at the empty tomb too. As the women start on their way to tell the disciples, Jesus meets them – and they clasp his feet and worship him. *The resurrection is the place where our worship of God finds its greatest reason.* Jesus who died, and rose again – this is the heart of our worship. And my prayer is that God will fill our hearts with praise and worship today.

The final encounter is, of course, this very moment. The stone was the object which the women were most worried about – ‘how are we to move it’? But again, God takes a trial and turns it on its head. **The stone was meant to be the seal of Jesus’ fate – instead it becomes the seal of Jesus victory. The stone is the first great witness to the power of God.**

And this call to witness is passed onto us. The angel tells the women: ‘Go quickly and tell his disciples.’ Despite Jesus’ joke with the Pharisees, stones cannot speak. *But we can.* And from that moment, the good news of Jesus’ resurrection has been passed on from person to person.

Where did you first here of it? For 90% of us, someone told us. And we keep telling the story, keep telling others that the tomb is empty, that Jesus has risen.

So this boring old stone has a story to tell, hasn't it? It points us to the word, to worship and to witness. And we too can be drawn back to the word, to worship and to witness.

And in this season of all seasons, may we grasp again the glorious truth of the resurrection. We may feel surrounded by death and darkness, or we may know of others who are. But this stone reminds us that death and darkness do not have the final word. Jesus has risen, he has overcome, he is greater than it all.

And may the message lift our hearts today, and may it speak with fresh power to our hurting world:

Thine be the glory, risen conquering son – endless is the victory thou over death hast won.