

'The Lord is risen indeed', Luke 24. 34.

Today, of course, is Easter Sunday. Two days ago was Good Friday. On these two days, many will have thought much of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus respectively.

We recall the words of the apostle Paul, 'we believe that Jesus died and rose again' (1 Thess. 4. 14), and 'I delivered to you as of first importance ... that Christ died for our sins ... and that He was buried ... and that He has been raised on the third day ... and that he was seen ...' (1 Cor. 15. 3-5).

Clearly, to the apostle, those two events represented the two central pillars¹ of the Christian gospel: 'Christ died' (and, as supporting evidence, men 'buried' Him); 'He has been raised' from the dead (and, as supporting evidence, men 'saw' Him).

We know that, following His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples before He ascended to heaven (Acts 1. 3; cf. Acts 13. 31). But I want us to focus now on **four incidents** which all took place on the very first of those days – on that memorable first Easter Sunday. (For the sake of space, I leave aside the occasion when He 'met' several women from Galilee, Matt. 28. 9 with Luke 23. 55 – 24. 1.)

In the days of His flesh, our Lord had spent many busy days. We might think, for example, of Mark 1. 21-34, where it seems that He performed more miracles in a single evening than are recorded in 1,000 years of Old Testament history. And now on this – the Resurrection day – the Risen Lord is very active still.

First, we witness a **sorrowing heart relieved**. Read John 20. 1, 11-16.

Mary had lost her greatest treasure, the One she spoke of repeatedly as 'Lord'. With Him she had had everything; without Him she had nothing. Hence her unrestrained 'weeping', of which we read no less than three times (vv. 11, 13, 15).

Our Lord's first action that day was 'to bind up the brokenhearted' (Isa. 61. 1), to fill the aching void in a sorrowing heart which neither apostles nor angels could fill (John 20. 10-14).

Though she didn't recognise Him from His physical appearance, (v.14) or from His kindly enquiry (v.20), there was no mistaking that voice when it spoke her name (v.16). It was the voice of the Good Shepherd calling the name of one of His sheep (John 10. 4, 27). And just one word sufficed to dispel the gloom of her grieving heart, and to dry her every tear.

Second, we witness a **soiled conscience restored**. Read Luke 22. 54-62; 24. 34; 1 Cor. 15. 5.

Who can tell what agony of conscience Peter had suffered since the hour when, following his threefold denial of Jesus, the Lord had turned and looked upon him, and he had gone out and wept bitterly? (Luke 22. 61-62). But we are not told (by Luke, or Paul, or anyone else) anything of what transpired in the private interview between the risen Lord and the first man to see Him after He rose. The Holy Spirit has drawn a veil over all.

We know only that, when Peter and the Lord were together later that day, in the company of the other disciples, there was no shadow between them, nothing to hinder Peter from enjoying the Lord's presence. Clearly, in that private meeting, Peter was restored to the Lord's fellowship, just as later, in his public encounter with Him, Peter would be restored to the Lord's service (John 21. 15-19).

Third, we witness **straying feet redirected**. Read Luke 24. 13-33.

Two disappointed and forlorn disciples, with hopes dashed (vv. 17, 21). But one sight of the risen Lord was all it needed to impel these two disciples to return the many miles back to Jerusalem at an evening hour so late that they had earlier been unwilling to allow a 'stranger' to continue on His way (vv. 29, 33).

This was not the first time it seemed that the Saviour would pass by (v. 28; cf. Matt. 20. 30; Mark 6. 48).

And finally, we witness **troubled minds calmed**. Read Luke 24. 36-46 and John 20. 19-22.

The assembled company's sight of the Saviour and His wounds were all it needed to transform their 'fear' into joy, John 20. 19-20.

It is marvellous to think that all four incidents took place within the compass of just one day, that unforgettable 'first day of the week' (John 20. 1, 19). But it is even more marvellous to know that **the same the living, loving Lord still ministers today to every last one of His people whose soul is gripped by feelings of (i) sorrow, (ii) guilt, (iii) disappointment, or (iv) fear.**

'Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead', 2 Tim. 2. 8.

Note

¹ Compare how it was said of the house of Dagon at Gaza that there were 'two middle pillars' which supported the temple, Judg. 16. 29.