

Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

A small child runs up to you, eyes glowing and excitement exuding from every fibre of their being. 'Come and see!' they cry, grabbing your hand and pulling you along with them to observe some small wonder. Your friend describes a newly discovered restaurant, regaling you with details about the decor and food. 'You have to come and see' they exclaim. An acquaintance on social media posts tantalising pictures of a stunning spot in nature, with views from the peak of a hike. 'Incredible!', they write, 'everyone should come and see this place'.

Come and see! Come and see - an invitation, a request, a proclamation of something to marvel over. A drawing in of others, a widening of the circle of knowledge. This is our Easter story and song that we have passed down over millennia. There is something we know that has to be shared, something to shout from the rooftops to the world.

In the last few weeks we heard the story of Lazarus dying. When Jesus finally arrives in the town he asks where Lazarus is, and is told 'come and see'. We then find ourselves at a familiar scene echoed in our Easter reading - a tomb, which is a cave with a stone sealing the entrance. Lazarus lies inside, dead and bound with cloths. Before speaking to Lazarus and performing a miracle, Jesus first asks for the stone to be removed. He is met with protest - Lazarus has been dead for 4 days, there will be a smell - but Jesus insists, and so the stone is rolled away. Seconds later, with barriers removed, the dead man emerges, released from the bonds of death and his stoney tomb.

Today, as we celebrate the most joyful occasion of discovering Jesus' own resurrection, there is a crucial difference. The grieving women arrive at Jesus' tomb, and there is a large stone sealing the entrance. Then the angel comes and rolls it away. However, Jesus does not emerge at this point. Jesus has preempted the removal of the stone, and is already risen. The stone is rolled away on Easter morning not in order to release Jesus from his tomb and let him out triumphantly into the world, but instead the stone is removed so that the witnesses can be allowed in. Instead of the command 'Lazarus, come out!', we find the invitation to the women to 'come, see the place where he lay'. An invitation to observe the power of God, and to wonder at how Jesus is not confined by our human bounds.

Come and see! Come and see the absence of a body, see the emptiness of the tomb, see the stunning lack of death and decay. See that Jesus is not here, for he has risen, he cannot be held by a tomb or any size of stone.

For the women, there is, of course, some level of fear here. Who among us wouldn't be frightened if we were expecting a quiet tomb but instead saw an angel appear and speak to us? And we are usually afraid of something that doesn't fit with our understanding of how the world works, or if we're faced with a new truth or fact that will change our lives.

This empty tomb heralded a new reality, and a new understanding of God. Light has broken through the darkness and everything has changed.

But the angel echoes one of Jesus' favourite phrases, not as a command but as assurance - do not be afraid. Yes, you have experienced the end of the world as you know it, but there is nothing to fear. Instead come and see how God is greater than even death or a tomb with a big heavy stone. Instead come and see how God cannot be constrained, but has already gone forth into the world ahead of you, bringing joy and hope and life.

Come and see that everything has changed, that you have nothing left to fear because all

that we know and love and hope for is held in this promise of new life which surpasses everything else.

So what is it to be a Christian? To be part of this legacy, to be voices which carry the story? What is it to be an Easter people?

It is this, to live in the world without fear. It is to be woven into the death and resurrection of Christ, so that we too are no longer subject to the power of death and for us it need not hold any fear. It is the knowledge that there is nothing which can constrain our God and we can expect the totally unexpected. It is to be part of the most wondrous thing that ever happened. It is to embody Jesus and all he taught. It is to blaze in the darkness with hope and confidence, to grab the hand of the person next to you and exclaim, 'come and see!'. Come and see the empty tomb, the most glorious absence which speaks of a presence among us forever.

This is our Easter story and song, our cry of invitation which we are called to take up and pass down through the centuries. This is the beat of our heart and the shape of our breath, that we have seen and known something incredible, and we are summoned with the women to go and tell the world! Come and see!