

TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD

Summary

Dennis discusses the significance of Jesus's resurrection, emphasising the transformation it brings. Through the study of scriptures and the theme of harmony, parallels are drawn between dissonance in music and unresolved questions in the Gospel of Mark. The sermon highlights the importance of belief in Jesus as the Son of God, urging for genuine repentance and renewal. The message concludes with a call to commit to faith's core truths, embracing Christ's resurrection's transformative power in our lives.

Icebreaker:

What is the most hilarious or embarrassing thing that has happened to you during a church service or religious event?"

Question 1

Why is the dissonance in both the musical example and the scriptures important to the theme of harmony?

Dennis mentioned the dissonant combination of notes in music and the unresolved questions in the Gospel of Mark, which both create tension.

Can you think of a situation in your own life where dissonance helped you grow in your faith or understanding?

Today, we celebrate the most pivotal event in Christian history: the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This event, recounted in the scriptures of Mark 16:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, is not merely a historical account but a living reality that shapes our faith and transforms our lives.

That thought of transformation has been at the heart of our Lenten studies over the past few weeks, as well as in the studies into the readings of Mark and John as we progressed through Lent.

Harmony, the process of allowing movement and dissonance, is at the forefront of our Lenten journey. Just as in music, harmony creates tension and release in the music's timbre. An unresolved dissonance is enough to drive most musicians to spare! If I ask Lois to play for me a scale, giving two counts on each note, beginning with C and ending with B, purists in the room will want to finish it!

Add to that B and tritone below with the note F; we have the "devil's interval". The nature of the notes resonates in such a manner that grabs our attention and sets up tension. Over the years, those who follow Marngrook, that other religion known as the AFL, will have noticed that the siren at the MCG is, in fact, a tritone! Diabolical! The dissonance is enough to carry over the 100 or patrons (most of the time) and cuts through!

There is a dissonance at work today in both the first letter of Paul to the people of Corinth and also in the resurrection sequence in Mark's gospel. On Good Friday, I noted that our oldest gospel scroll, dating back to the fourth century, finishes discordantly. They were afraid because...

Mark has taken us through the beginnings of Jesus' ministry with the words, "The Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God." On seeing Jesus's death, the Centurion proclaims, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Question 2

How do the baptismal promises of turning, repenting, and renouncing relate to the theme of transformation?

The sermon explains that these promises symbolise a transformational moment in our lives, where we shift our focus away from sin and toward God.

What does it look like in your own life when you turn, repent, and renounce? Can you share an example?

Question 3

In Mark 16:1-8, how do the women's emotions change throughout their encounter at the empty tomb?

The women initially experience fear and confusion, but later, they are filled with overwhelming joy when they encounter an angel who proclaims, 'He has risen!'

When did your emotions change drastically during a significant spiritual experience?

Question 4

Why is believing in the Son of God (Jesus) essential for Christians, and how does it go beyond acknowledging His existence?

The sermon states that belief in the Son of God involves entrusting our lives to Him as our Lord and Saviour and lies at the heart of our Christian faith.

How has your belief in Jesus impacted your life and how you approach your faith?

Question 5

How can we apply the lessons of Easter and the resurrection in our daily lives?

The sermon encourages us to live as people resurrected with Christ, walking in the newness of life and loving sacrificially.

What specific actions or choices can you make to demonstrate your belief in the resurrection and its transformative power?

In the Gospel today, their encounter with Jesus does not startle them. The encounter was with a 'man dressed in white', presumably an angel or messenger. They are told that all the things Jesus did had been accomplished, and they were to return to Peter and the disciples and ask them to go to Galilee.

Somewhat true to the idea of a Messianic secret, they fled, telling no one. How long would I have remained silent after witnessing and hearing this news? We do not know from Mark's account, but no doubt, the young man's words would have sounded in their heads, just like the siren at the MCG to mark the beginning and the end, or if you prefer, the Alpha and Omega.

In Mark 16:1-8, we witness the profound astonishment of the women who discovered the empty tomb. Their initial fear and confusion turned into overwhelming joy as they encountered the angel who proclaimed, "He has risen!" This proclamation reverberates through the ages, reminding us that death could not hold Jesus captive. He conquered the grave, demonstrating his power over sin and death.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, the apostle Paul reaffirms the significance of the resurrection. He emphasises that the gospel he preached is rooted in the resurrection of Christ. Without this central truth, our faith is in vain. The resurrection validates Jesus' identity as the Son of God and confirms the promise of eternal life for all who believe in Him.

Belief in the Son of God lies at the heart of our Christian faith. It is not merely acknowledging His existence but entrusting our lives to Him as our Lord and Saviour. Belief requires us to surrender our will to his, to trust in his wisdom and goodness even when circumstances seem bleak. This unwavering faith empowers us to overcome every trial and tribulation.

However, belief in Christ necessitates a response exemplified by the baptismal promises of turning, repenting, and renouncing. Turning signifies a change of direction—a turning away from sin and towards God. Repentance is more than just feeling sorry for our wrongdoing; sincere remorse transforms heart and mind. Renouncing involves rejecting the ways of the world and embracing the values of the kingdom of God.

Our baptismal promises are founded on that very principle. Traditionally, we are asked first, either directly or through surety, or even at confirmation before a bishop, "Do you turn to Christ?" It requires for us a soulful change in our direction. We are to face the Risen Lord. That very act of turning to Christ is to set our backs on something. That act of turning is repenting. It is a transformational moment. We put our back to sin, all that stops us from being fully loving and living the word of God, and all that separates us from our neighbours and ourselves.

The next step is to renounce all that is selfish, unjust, and evil. This is the beginning of the journey. We take a step towards Jesus and away from sin. It is a highly symbolic and charged journey that requires us to renew often. It is easy to be lost and turn back. Like the women at the tomb, running and being afraid is easy. It is easy to become stagnant and drift. Each year, we renew ourselves before the holy waters of the font and pledge to a year of harmony and togetherness as one body of Christ and heirs with him in the eternal kingdom to come.

Just as the women at the tomb were called to witness the resurrection, we are called to witness Christ's transformative power in our lives. Our belief in the resurrection should not remain confined to Easter Sunday but should permeate every aspect of our existence. It should compel us to live as people who have been resurrected with Christ—people who walk in the newness of life, love sacrificially, and proclaim the good news to all nations.

Former Bishop of Durham, N.T. (Tom) Wright, noted, "Perhaps, in the strange providence of God, the way Mark's book now finishes encourages us all the more to explore not only the faith of the early church, that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, but our faith. There is a blank at the end of the story, and we are invited to fill it ourselves. Do we take Easter for granted, or have we found ourselves shocked at the strange new work of God? What do we know of the risen Lord? Where is he now going ahead of us? What tasks has he for us to undertake today, to take 'the gospel of the kingdom' to the ends of the earth?"

As we reflect on the resurrection sequence in Mark 16:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, let us recommit ourselves to the fundamental truths of our faith. Let us believe wholeheartedly in the Son of God, embrace the call to repentance and renewal, and boldly proclaim the gospel to a world in desperate need of redemption.

May the power of the resurrection continue to transform us and empower us to live as faithful disciples of Christ. Amen

Prayer Points *-based on Intercessions Year A, B and C.* Ian Black SPCK

Sing to the Lord a new song for he has done marvellous things.

Shape us as witnesses of your grace and power.

Set our hearts at peace with thanksgiving.

Form us in your grace and likeness.

Strengthen and uphold them in your life and love.

Wipe away tears from our eyes that we may rejoice and be glad in you.