

# Easter Day Whole Service: Reconciliation, Resurrection, Revelation

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Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake.

And the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the woman, Do not be afraid. For I know that it is Jesus you seek who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.

Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you to Galilee, and there you will see him.

See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings.

[ 1 : 03 ] And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.

Christ the Lord is risen today. Hallelujah. We stand to sing the great Easter hymn.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia.

[ 2 : 00 ] May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

Alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

[ 3 : 22 ] May the Lord have come, alleluia. Alleluia.

Alleluia. Alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

[ 4 : 42 ] May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia. May the Lord have come, alleluia.

May the Lord have come, alleluia.

Oh, do sit and we join our hearts together in prayer. Let us pray. Oh, Lord God, King of the heavens, who has proclaimed in the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the death of death and the birth of life everlasting.

[ 6 : 16 ] We enter your presence this Easter morning with joy and with great rejoicing. And so we ask, fill our praises with your joy, even as you fill our hearts with the truth of your glorious gospel of life.

Through Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead and who reigns forever with you and with the Holy Spirit in glory everlasting.

We ask all these things. Amen. A very, very warm welcome indeed to our Easter service this morning, especially if you're visiting with us.

If it's your first time here in our church, we welcome you most warmly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's our family service today. We have no Sunday school or Bible class today or next Sunday, but there are creches available up in the gallery at the back there for young children.

And also the wine downstairs is open and the service is beamed down there so you can see and hear. And if later on you would find it easier to be out with young kids, you're very welcome to do so. [ 7 : 32 ] A couple of notices next Sunday. We have our 20s and 30s and young families lunch after the service and you're most warmly welcome to stay for that. And also we are this Easter having, as our Easter sacrificial offering, a special offering for the work of the Christian Institute.

Christian Institute is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of the Christian faith and the preservation of goodness and justice and righteousness in our society.

It campaigns to that end and it campaigns for the freedom for the Christian church to proclaim the gospel of life of the Lord Jesus Christ in an ever-changing society.

It's a very worthy ministry, one that we support very heartily here. And you have an opportunity to give to that today if you like. There are offering baskets coming around shortly.

You would need to put something in, especially saying that it's for the Easter sacrificial offering. Don't worry if you haven't remembered. You can do that tonight. You can even do it next week. Or after the service, there are boxes in the bookshop area if you'd like to contribute to that.

[ 8 : 41 ] But our offering for our regular offering for our Evangelical Ministry and Mission Fund will be uplifted just now. As we do that, we're going to squeeze in an extra song today and the music will play the verse through as the offering begins to come around.

We'll remain seated and sing the first couple of verses of this hymn, See What a Morning, and then once the offering's finished going around, I'll ask you to stand and we can sing the last verse together.

But our offerings will be received and then we'll join singing in this next hymn. amen Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 10 : 58 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You remain standing, and we confess our faith together in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven. Do be seated. And if you'd turn with me in your Bibles, we're going to read together in Matthew chapter 27 at verse 50, which you'll find on page 835.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, look, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

And the earth shook and the rocks split and the tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

[ 13 : 39 ] When the centurion and those who were with him keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, truly, this was the Son of God.

Your Bibles open with me. I want to look as we go on singing this morning at these verses which tell us all about the death of darkness.

If you're like me, you love this time of year when the days are lengthening so much and you wake up with the light instead of going to work in the darkness. I got so depressed with the winter darkness this year that I bought myself a light box so that when I sit at my desk at 8 o'clock in the morning in the dark, I now am bathed with the beauty of sunlight.

I thought I would do a double whammy and I also bought myself a dawn simulator which is an alarm clock that wakes you up very gently with the light coming on gradually over half an hour to make it seem as if dawn is coming.

It's really rather wonderful. And you know, I've got so much more energy this winter. At least that's what it says on the box. And I'm so much less grumpy than I normally am in the winter. My family in church style haven't seemed to notice that at all.

[15:02] They're a very unobservant lot. So I'm living in the light. And of course, Easter is all about light. It's all about light in the darkness.

A couple of days ago on Good Friday, we looked at Mark's message of the darkness in his account of Jesus' crucifixion. The message of the two great cries of Jesus from the cross in the darkness. And Matthew, of course, also in his account that we've read here, also draws attention to these things. But Matthew especially draws attention to something else, to a great contrast of darkness and light.

Light in the midst of the darkness surrounding Jesus' death. A light, he tells us, that spells the end of darkness forever.

And these four little verses that we read, verses 51 to 54 of Matthew chapter 27, even before the account of the resurrection in chapter 28, they give a foretaste of the glorious light that shines out into the world through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[16:12] It's rather light, my dawn simulator. It's a glimpse in advance, as it were, of what is to come. It's a premonition of what Jesus' death really does accomplish.

So I want to look at these verses this morning, this Easter morning, and to this light that speaks about the death of darkness forever. Just so you see that I'm not just making up my ideas about Easter, I'm not abusing the text of the Bible, I'm not foisting my interpretation of Matthew's words. I want you to see just how clearly he draws attention to this light in the midst of the darkness by the very way he structures his account. Look at verse 45 of Matthew 27. He tells us there was darkness from the 6th hour until the 9th hour, from noon until 3pm.

Now look down to verse 57. He tells us about what happened when evening came. In other words, when it started to get dark, about 6pm. So obviously, between 3pm and 6pm, evening, the light had returned.

Immediately after, Jesus' cry in verse 50. That's why verse 51 begins with that word, behold. It means look. It means look with your eyes and see.

[17:33] In other words, Matthew is telling us, look. Look at the light that has returned in the great light that is accomplished in the death of Jesus Christ.

See, says Matthew. It's as if he's borrowing Paul's words to Timothy. See, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, has brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel.

In these four little verses, they show us so brightly and so carefully the bright light of day. They show us exactly what Jesus' death has accomplished.

Because you can see, Matthew points us to three great openings that are accomplished in Jesus' death on the cross. Openings that spell the death of darkness and the dawning of light forever in our world.

So, I want to look at these three openings one after another as we intersperse them with some more Easter hymns. Look at verse 51. The first thing he tells us is that in Jesus' death the curtain is opened.

[18:36] Look, he says, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. That was a curtain, a huge and heavy curtain that separated the holiest place of the temple from all the temple courts outside where the people could go.

It was a curtain that said, no entry. No entry to the presence of God. Only the high priest could ever go in there only once a year on the day of atonement and only carrying the blood of the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people.

Otherwise, he would certainly and immediately die. So, why was that? What was that curtain all about? Now, those of you who were here on Friday will know.

Of course, it's the curtain that signifies the separation of God from human beings because of sin, because of the great rebellion against God's good and perfect rule, of our rebellion against the relationship that we were made for to have with God the Holy One.

It is an exclusion order, as it were. Sometimes we read about that, don't we, when somebody has been in a relationship with someone but they have abused them or perhaps stalked them or tormented them and the judge imposes an exclusion order.

[19:53] You cannot go near this person ever again. And that exclusion order was placed by God, the judge, upon human beings way back at the beginning. Read about it in Genesis chapter 3.

Signified by man being cast out of God's presence, the garden where they walked and talked together. And the cherubim with a flaming sword, that fierce angel, is placed to guard the way back

to the tree of life.

By the way, cherubim, cherubs, are not at all like you find them on Christmas cards, fairy-like beings. Quite the opposite of the Bible. They're fiery beings. They're frightening beings. They keep you away from God.

And you see, the tabernacle was a forerunner of the temple. It was the tent that Moses was commanded to make in the wilderness. to be among God's people.

And it represented Eden. It represented the place where God allowed himself to dwell on earth. And that curtain that separated the dwelling of God from human beings had embroidered on it the cherubim.

[ 20 : 59 ] It was as clear as day. Keep away. There is danger for even those who seek access to God. He is utterly holy.

He cannot tolerate the presence of sin. There is no way in is what the curtain said. Not even God's chosen people could enter into his near presence. And they could only maintain themselves alive even distantly in his presence through the constant repetition of sacrifices year in, year out, again and again and again.

Now, later on in the New Testament the book of Hebrews explains exactly what that symbolism was in the tabernacle with its curtain. Hebrews 9 verse 8 says this, By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy place is not yet opened.

There's estrangement, there's forced separation because sin has broken that relationship with God. It's destroyed it. It's like a relationship that you might have once had that has been ruptured because of wrongdoing.

There's separation, there's estrangement, isn't there, from your colleague or your friend or your lover. And even if you want to make amends, it's not actually in your power anymore to do that, is it?

[ 22 : 22 ] Not if you've caused that rupture. Because unless they forgive you, unless they bear themselves the painful cost of opening up that way and allowing there to be reconciliation, unless they themselves say, yes, all right, I'm willing to talk again, then there's nothing that you can do.

And that's far from an easy thing to do, isn't it? Anybody who's had a broken relationship like that, who's been wrong, you know how hard it is to forgive that's why our whole world is so full of the effects of lasting rupture in relationships, isn't it?

It's because the price of forgiveness, the price to the forgiver of true forgiveness, the price that must be borne if there's ever going to be reconciliation, that price is so high.

And so often, that's why there is no reconciliation, that's why there are ethnic hatreds that fester away for generations and generations.

That's why between nations they're often exactly the same kinds of things, or within communities, among neighbours, among former friends and colleagues and families, between spouses, parents and children.

[ 23 : 40 ] Our world is full, isn't it, of curtains of separation that make reconciliation all but impossible between human beings.

but you see, the greatest, the most disastrous separation is between human beings and God. That rupture, actually, that lies behind every single ruptured relationship in our world of humanity.

Sin against God is ultimately the cause of every single sin against human beings. But look, says Matthew, in the death of Jesus Christ, the curtain is torn in two from top to bottom, from heaven to earth.

The way that was not yet open is now open. Hebrews 9, verse 12 says that Jesus, the great high priest, entered once for all into the holy place not by the means of blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, securing, therefore, an eternal redemption.

It goes on to say that by his death, Jesus opened to us a new and living way through the curtain that is his flesh. It's a way through the curtain of separation.

[ 25 : 03 ] It's a way back into the presence of God from the darkness and the brokenness of our ruptured relationship with him because of our sin. Heaven and earth are brought back together again.

They're reconciled. And therefore, human beings and God are brought back together. They're reconciled through Jesus' death on the cross. It's the death of the darkness of sin.

He, God's perfect son, tasted death as the wages of sin, as our sin, that we, as God's rebellious creatures, might once again taste of the tree of life.

Verse 50, he yielded up his spirit and the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom. And because there is, through his blood, real forgiveness for the past, there is real reconciliation forever with God.

The temple itself is obsolete. All religion is obsolete. There's no more need anymore for priests or sacrifices or penances or payments. There is no need any longer for any intermediaries between man and God because Jesus himself is the new and the living way.

[ 26 : 26 ] Darkness has been defeated and Eden is restored. That's what Matthew is telling us. That's what Easter means. The curtain is torn forever and there's light.

And that's why there's rejoicing. That's why Romans 5 says in Paul's words, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received the hardest thing in the world. Reconciliation with God. And God has done it for us. it's come from top to bottom. Friends, that means that nobody else, if God has taken away the barrier, nobody else can put a barrier between you and God our Heavenly Father because he's opened the way.

That means that there is nothing in your past that can prevent you knowing that great reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. The gift of his grace that we've received reconciliation, we've received heaven and he asks you to come and to receive that.

Let's ponder that for a minute as we stop and as we sing again Charles Wesley's great hymn.

Listen to the last verse. In Christ accepted and brought near and clothed in righteousness divine, I see the path to life made clear and all your merits Lord are mine.

[ 27 : 59 ] Death, hell and sin are now subdued. All grace is now to sinners given and so I plead the atoning blood and by your gift receive your heaven.

The curtain is opened. The tunnels are both dwelt and and offenders will you for all in your own ways■■■■■■■■■■ memo can■■■ Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 31 : 21 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The curtain is open and there is reconciliation between God and man.

But now look at verse 52, because it tells us also that through Jesus Christ, the tombs are opened and there is resurrection.

There's reconciliation of body and soul forever. The earth shook and the rocks split and the tombs also were opened.

And our ESV Bibles correctly have a full stop there. If you've got a new international version, it's not as clearly put as it is in the ESV.

Because really the next sentence is a parenthesis. Look at it. It would be better actually to be put in brackets, because after telling us that the tombs were opened right then, Matthew is adding a little bit of explanation about what that means by bearing witness to something extraordinary that was witnessed not right then, but after Jesus' resurrection.

[ 32 : 39 ] You see he says, What is Matthew telling us here?

Well look, he's saying, See the light of life. The theological earthquake that gave birth to the new age in the Lord Jesus Christ, death and resurrection, causes an earthquake that reverses the very curse of death itself.

That's what he's telling us. This is the death of the darkness of death. And though it was after Jesus' own resurrection that these bodies were raised, and there was a little preview if you like, it's rather like a film trailer about the real story.

This temporary resurrection of believers from the past ages. Nevertheless, he is telling us that it was in the very moment of Jesus' death that the hold of the tombs was broken forever.

Look, he says, this is the death of death in the death of Jesus Christ. It's begun. It's what's most marvellously illustrated by C.S. Lewis when Aslan in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe explains to the girls, to Susan and to Lucy, what his death on the stone table was really all about when they see him alive again.

[ 34 : 13 ] And he says, This is the beginning of death working backwards. And he portrays that marvellous picture, doesn't he, of all the statues, all the people who have been turned to stone, all

the creatures in the courtyard of the castle of the White Witch coming back to life as the breath of the risen Aslan is breathed upon them.

And that's what Matthew's telling us here. It's real. The prisoners are set free from their bondage to death itself. Because heaven and earth are reunited together in the death of Christ, so body and souls of human beings will be reunited forever in life that is everlasting.

What was the curse way back at the beginning of man's first rebellion? To dust you shall return.

You see, the death of Jesus Christ reverses the curse of death.

Once again, Matthew emphasizes so clearly for us the nature of this great exchange. Look at verses 60 to 61. It's all about tombs, isn't it? Jesus is laid in a new tomb, he says.

A stone seals the tomb. The women sit looking at the tomb. But you see, in the very moment of Jesus' death, the tombs of believers are broken apart forever.

[ 35 : 39 ] The death of the darkness of death forever in the death of Jesus Christ. There's such irony too in his account, isn't there?

The contemporary world then, they just didn't have a clue what was going on. They didn't understand Jesus' cry at all. Verse 49. Oh, poor Jesus.

They think he's pathetic and weak. Give him a drink, they say. Oh, maybe a saviour. Maybe Elijah will come and help him. Poor Jesus, this is a terrible death. The contemporary world didn't understand a thing about it.

But the dead, the saints, they understood what it meant and they rose up and they rejoiced and they danced in the streets. They shouted to the world, they shouted to the world, you don't understand.

Our saviour, Jesus Christ, has brought life and immortality to light through his glorious death. That's what they'd longed for.

[ 36 : 39 ] It's what they'd waited for. It's what all the prophets of the old era had promised would be when God sent his saviour. You listen to Isaiah. The Lord of hosts will swallow up on this mountain, that is in Jerusalem, the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. Your dead shall live.

Their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awaken, sing for joy, for your dew is a dew of light and the earth will give birth to the dead.

That's what this is all about, says Matthew. Look, can't you see? And this sign of real resurrected believers rising up with the risen Jesus, it's just a foretaste, says the Bible, of the great rising up of all who are in Christ when Jesus the Lord comes to reign.

Christ himself is the first fruit, says the Apostle Paul, and then at his coming, all those who belong to him, all. Not one of his people will be missing.

[ 37 : 58 ] Not one. That's what Easter means. The tombs are open. There is resurrection. Death is working backwards already in this world because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

Friends, do you see what difference that makes to your life and to mine? Mid the tears of bereavement there in Jerusalem, these saints rose up and said, no, no, rejoice.

There is resurrection. There is a future. There is hope. Sometimes people tell me about funerals that they've been to of friends and colleagues and neighbours.

Sometimes they're humanist funerals. They're bleak and devastating affairs. grief with no hope, no future.

A scene only of utter loss and total despair. Cold, lifeless corpses being lowered into the ground with no hope at all.

[ 39 : 05 ] And a whole lifetime, just think of it, a lifetime of love and of joy, of belonging, of meaning, of close and dear relationship.

All of that robbed by the jaws of the last enemy, of death. And there's just utter darkness. There's inconsolable grief.

I've taken many funerals myself where I know there has been no faith, no light, no hope, nothing in the darkness of death, just bleak and sorrowful misery. But how different it is for those who have seen the light that dawns on that first Easter morning, the light that banishes the darkness of death forever and ever.

I think of funerals we've had here in this building just in the last weeks and months. How different it's been. I think of a year ago, just before Easter, when I buried my own father.

Amidst the tears, how different it was to see that light. I was thinking back this week to my very first Easter here with you as a congregation where just before Easter three of our beloved members died within the space of a few days together.

[ 40 : 28 ] And Easter was a time of mourning and grief. And yet, there was the light of the glorious life and hope that only the resurrection of our Lord Jesus brings.

The tombs have been opened. And we know that the bodies of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus Christ will rise up just as those bodies did then.

But this time it will be forever. And their rejoicing and their joy will never ever end. We know this. And we've seen the preview right here in the words of Matthew, the witness.

Look, he says, see the light of Easter. The tombs have been opened. There is resurrection. There is reconciliation of body and soul forever for all who know and who love and who trust in the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The tombs are opened at Easter. Friends, if you really understand that, you just have to stand up and sing.

[ 41 : 42 ] I'm going to let you do that right now as we sing our next hymn. In resurrection bodies like Jesus' very own, we will rise to meet our Saviour in joy around his throne.

We'll marvel at the mercy that bids poor sinners come, be welcomed at his table and share his heavenly home. That's what it means that the tombs are opened.

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Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 44 : 33 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The curtain is opened and so there is reconciliation. Heaven and earth are reconciled.

Man and God are reconciled. And the tombs are opened and so there is resurrection, body and soul reconciled forever.

But of course there's a third shaft of light that Matthew draws our attention to here in verse 54. It's really the climax of the whole of the story of his gospel.

Because in the Easter message he says also eyes are opened and there is revelation. When the centurion and those who are with him keeping watch over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, truly this was the Son of God.

[ 46 : 34 ] You see what Matthew is saying to us? All through this gospel he says, from the very beginning of the story, I've been telling you the truth about Jesus the Messiah, the Christ.

But it's here, he says. It's here through the terrible darkness of the cross at Calvary. It's here that at last you see and you understand the ultimate truth.

It's here that you see the ultimate revelation of God, the sovereign creator and Lord of this universe. It's here in the cross with all its darkness.

That is the death of darkness forever in all our human understanding of God Almighty and who he is and what he is like. It's in the cross, Matthew says, that all our darkness is flooded with light and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines out to us brightly in the face of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The one who came to save his people from their sins. What is the light that Jesus' death shines out to us all to know what God is really like?

[ 47 : 57 ] Well, we see in the cross, don't we, that he is a God of absolute holiness. He is the God who must separate himself totally from sin.

He's the God who can't look upon sin. He's the God who must punish sin because he is a God of justice whose law accuses every single human person who has ever lived and finds them, every one, guilty in his sight.

And just as that temple curtain is torn open to reveal the holiest place of the temple where the Ark of the Covenant was and where God's holy law sat, so it is in the message of the cross that the veil is torn away and we see clearly a revelation of the holiness and the justice of God.

And we see in Jesus' death the terrible nature of the penalty that sin against God's holy law deserves because he stood in our place.

As the prophet Isaiah had foretold, he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

[ 49 : 18 ] And what that means, you see, is that what you see, the punishment that Jesus Christ bore on the dark day at Calvary, on the cross where he died, what you see there is what God thinks of your life.

It's a revelation, isn't it? It's an eye-opener. We're experts, aren't we, at sweeping our shortcomings under the carpet. We're experts like the people who dock to the fashion magazines, experts with the airbrush.

Every blemish of the skin is removed, every wrinkle, every spot. And we're terrific with the airbrush, aren't we, when we look at our own hearts. And we can fool a lot of the people a lot of the time.

We can even fool ourselves a lot of the time. But, you see, the cross teaches us that we can't fool God. We can't fool God any of the time.

Jesus had no sin. You only have to read the pages of the Gospels for that to be clear. But he bore the punishment of sin that opens our eyes to God's view of sin.

[ 50 : 33 ] God sees it as utterly abhorrent, deadly serious, that which separates him totally from all humanity. That's why Jesus cried out, My God, why have you forsaken me?

Because the cross reveals the God of absolute holiness who must punish sin. And yet, at the same time, the cross is also another great eye-opener.

It opens our eyes to the God of absolute love. For this is the great act of love, says the Bible. The great act of love in all time, in all history, in all eternity, that focuses for us the depth of love in the heart of God for his people.

However wayward, however undeserving they are, and we are. Paul writes to the church in Ephesus and says, Christ loved us and gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God for us.

The Son of God, says Paul, who loved me and gave himself for me. You see, that means that the cross also shows us just how much God, our Heavenly Father, values our human lives.

[ 52 : 10 ] Despite everything that separates us from him, despite all the guilt which is real and terrible and cannot be airbrushed out of the way and must be punished, tells us how much he values human lives because he came in the person of the Holy Son of God to give his life that he might save his people from their sins.

The cross of Jesus is the great place of revelation. The ultimate, the unique, the final, the only utterly true revelation of a God who really is a God of holiness and a God of love.

The cross is the great place of revelation that tells us who God is and what God has done. It's in the judgment of the cross that we see his infinite mercy.

It's in the weakness of the cross that we see his infinite power. and it's in the death of the cross that we see its eternal life.

That's why Matthew records verse 54 here as the great climax of his story because it's in the cross and in the message of Christ crucified that the eyes of men and women are opened, that the darkness is banished, that light dawns in the souls of men and women and they find life.

[ 53 : 44 ] Friends, do you see what that means? If these hardened, hostile and pagan soldiers that surrounded the cross of Jesus, if they can be touched by the message of the cross, if their eyes can be opened to see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, then so can your eyes be opened to know God at the cross.

and your friends and your family and your workmates, all of those who are still in the dark about the nature and the truth of the living God, even those who want to be in the dark and who keep themselves in the dark, their eyes also can be opened through the light that streams from eternity into the hearts of men and women in the message of Christ crucified.

The gospel of Christ crucified has the power. It is the power of God for salvation to all who believe, says Paul, because it is a message that brings revelation.

It opens eyes to recognize the one God made known in Jesus Christ. And it opens hearts to draw people into a relationship of saving love with God who is the God of holy love.

That is why this is the message that we must proclaim. And it does so because it is the message that brings reconciliation. It opens the heavens and it opens the way back to God through the

curtain of Christ's broken body given for us.

[ 55 : 31 ] That is why we must believe it if we want to know God. And it promises resurrection because Christ's death has opened the graves.

It has restored the bodies of the saints forever. For every one of us here this morning whose life has been tinged with the pain of grief and loss.

Oh how we must rejoice in that. Easter spells the death of darkness. It spells the birth of light forever and ever.

Our saviour Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

years ago in the church I grew up in Edinburgh there was a wayside pulpit and at one Easter on the text board it said this we are an Easter people and hallelujah is our song.

[ 56 : 36 ] friends let's go out into the world this Easter with our hearts and our lips singing that song the song of the death of death and the birth of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. We're going to sing hallelujah as we end our service this morning. Christ is risen hallelujah risen our victorious head sing his praises hallelujah Christ is risen from the dead.

Amen. hallelujah I The End

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[ 61 : 34 ] The End