

## **Resurrection**

### **Mark 16.1-8**

Sooner or later in your life, you are going to go through something that will feel like a death.

It will be an experience that makes you feel as if all the good things you hoped for in life have now ended, and you can't see a way forward, or how you are supposed to carry on. It might be a serious injury that ends your dream of a career in sports. It might be the end of a relationship that you hoped was going to last. It could be the death of someone you love, that you can't imagine living without.

For me, it came with the end of a career. From the age of 16 I had wanted to be the pastor of a church. I dreamed about it, worked towards it, studied towards it, and finally, after years of planning, when I was 30, became the pastor of a church. Three years later, I quit. I had hated being the pastor of a church. It left me feeling burned out, disillusioned, and lost. I went back to my original career of teaching – something that I also knew I didn't want to do with the rest of my life. But at 33 years old, I had no plans, no dreams of what I wanted for my life, no passion for anything; just the dreary day-to-day drudgery of doing something I didn't want to be doing to keep paying the bills for my family. All my dreams had died.

So when I read the gospel story of what Jesus' disciples went through after Jesus' death, I have an idea of what that must have felt like. Let's take Peter. He was a fisherman when Jesus met him, but he wasn't a very successful one and he wasn't catching many fish. Jesus called him to follow him, and took him and the other disciples on a three year adventure, where they saw miracles and saw the world being changed around them. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the one who was going to change the world and bring the Kingdom of God on earth. Their lives had meaning, excitement and purpose.

And then Jesus died. They had thought he was going to be King, or some kind of saviour. Instead, he was arrested and killed. And as far as they knew – It was all over. Everything they had hoped for and were excited about, was over. And so Peter went back to being a fisherman.

Sooner or later, something like this is going to happen to you. Maybe it already has. It happened to me. And then you are faced with a challenge, or a question, really: is life good or bad? Is it meaningful? Is there a reason behind it? Or is it just chaos? Is it meaningless? Is there no point, no hope that it end well?

We all will have to come up with an answer to this question. And the answer we come up with will determine how we live our lives. If we decide that there is no purpose and no hope, then we will become bitter, depressed, self-centred, negative. We will give up on our dreams and we will pull down other people's too.

But the good news is this: death is never the end of the story – it is just the beginning of a new one – often a bigger one.

Three days after he was put to death, Jesus comes back alive. At first his disciples won't believe it. Peter is at his nets when he hears the news. And it begins a new chapter in his life. Not only is Jesus alive, but he gives the same power that he had to Peter and the other disciples. Peter is the first of the disciples to perform a miracle – he heals a paralysed man so that he walks again. And so begins the second half of Peter's life – his mission of spreading the Good News about Jesus.

Something similar happened to me. When I was back working as a teacher, with no idea where to go next or what to do with my life, I got a phone call asking if I was interested in being the Chaplain at Rathkeale College. And so began the second part of my life, one that has been better in every way, than I had imagined it would be.

The message of Easter – of the resurrection – is that death is not the end. It is that life is good, and hopeful, and it will all be OK in the end.

There will be seasons of death in our lives – seasons of things coming to an end, seasons of loss. But like the natural seasons, they will be followed by new life.

Even in actual death. The message of the resurrection is that death is not the final word. In our age, which is dominated by scepticism and radical materialism, talking about life after death has become almost like talking about fairy tales. But you do not need to look far to find the evidence; for example the thousands and thousands of near death experiences, where people recount similar stories time after time, of being surrounded by love, by family members who have passed on, of being taken to a peaceful and beautiful place – too beautiful to be put into words, most of them say.

Stories about being given messages about their lives, and about the importance of love above all else in this life. And the consistent message that people who have NDE's come back with is: Everything is going to be OK. Don't be afraid. You are more loved than you could ever imagine. Everything will be made right at the end.