

Mike's message

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal!

*Easter Day Family Worship and Baptism
Sunday 27th March, 9.30am*

Easter is the major celebration of the Christian year. It encompasses and celebrates the heart of our Gospel - as the love of God, revealed in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is shown to be greater than all that seeks to imprison us, even death itself.



There's a new film in the cinemas this year based on the Easter events. 'Risen' is written from the point of view of the Romans in the days following the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. It puts a Roman soldier, Clavius, in the lead role as he investigates what would become the most famous disappearance of a body. The empty tomb is treated in the film as a crime scene, and the disciples are caught up in a manhunt, as Clavius investigates what has happened to the body of Jesus.

The plot of 'Risen' is based on Matthew's Gospel. The Roman authorities remember that Jesus said "*after three days I will rise again*" (Matthew 27 .63). Thinking that the disciples might try to steal Jesus' body, the Romans place a guard at the tomb, seal the stone and keep watch. When the tomb is later found to be empty the authorities seek to explain it by telling the soldiers to say "*his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep*" (Matthew 28 .13). This explanation soon unravels and triggers the investigation as the portrayal of the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel takes on the feeling of a 'CSI: Judaea Desert 33AD'. 'Risen' opens in cinemas on 18th March. Just in time for Holy Week and Easter viewing.

What is the message of the Resurrection for us today? The Resurrection isn't an event that belongs in the past but is a present and living reality. That's why we say "Christ is Risen" not "Christ has Risen". It's a living reality in our lives and we are called to proclaim it in the lives of others too.

The love of God, stronger even than death itself, can transform lives that are imprisoned by guilt from the past or something weighing us down in the present. It can free us from prejudices that trap us behind walls of suspicion and fear or impede our ability to love others. All this can be removed when we realise that God loves us with a love that makes "vain the stone, the watch, the seal" (Charles Wesley) for:

*Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate,
light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death;
victory is ours through Him who loves us. (Desmond Tutu)*