

## **SERMON – EASTER SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2015**

Reading: Matthew 28: 1-10 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

### **BACKGROUND**

I want to draw your attention this morning to the reason why Paul did not include the women as the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul was a God-fearing Pharisee who met the Lord on the way to Damascus. He was, as he says in this text, disadvantaged because he only became a disciple after the resurrection of Jesus. He did not share the journey with Jesus as the other disciples did. But God appeared to him nevertheless and called him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul presented a case like any other solicitor would do in a court of law - that the resurrection of Jesus really happened. To the Gentiles and the Jews this could have been too much to believe. So Paul stresses 4 facts that could not be disputed namely:

- Christ died, for the sins of the world;
- He was buried;
- On the third day He rose again;
- He appeared to real people who were still living, like “Cephas” or Peter and a lot of other people!

He made sure that none of his arguments could be challenged with any counter argument.

And because he was presenting a strong case he did not want to compromise his arguments to include the women as

the first witnesses. Why? Well in their society women were not regarded as reliable witnesses and Paul did not want to compromise his strong case for the resurrection of Jesus.

So what is the bottom-line? Paul acts like a typical male in his society of that time which can help us to understand why Jesus was regarded as a “revolutionary” and “liberal”. Paul’s stance represents the prejudices that existed against women. But Jesus included women in His ministry on earth. He chose to reveal Himself to them first because He thought that they were reliable and trustworthy!

Amen

## **SERMON**

The text verses for the sermon are: “<sup>8</sup> So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him.”

We, as people of faith tend to have a lot of prejudices. We have prejudices against other Christian traditions. We often like to make distinctions between Christian people. There are even conservative evangelicals who say that not all people who come to church have given their lives to Jesus! There are even church leaders who want to make distinctions between baptisms and blessings.

It seems strange because we all know - only God can see the hearts of people. Only God can judge between those who have faith and those who cling to religion. Only God knows the hearts of people who come to church. Our task, as people who have faith, is to do what Christ did, namely to include rather

than to exclude, to welcome rather than judge, to help rather than to condemn or criticise.

So the bottom line is we cannae criticise Paul for excluding women when we do exactly the same in our society, in our fellowship, in our churches and at the places where we work.

The message of the hope of the resurrection goes beyond borders of skin, gender, abilities, language, culture, class, colour, sexual orientation and creed. It includes everyone who confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ died, was buried and was resurrected on the third day. The resurrection opened the door for all the believers to enter into the eternal kingdom of God where there will be nae crying and nae suffering.

And yes the resurrection is not an urban legend. It is not something that people of faith have to prove. It is just something that we need to believe and hold on to especially when the going gets tough.

May God help us to have faith to see that His grace, forgiveness, mercy and hope were for everyone and may we share the living hope of the eternal kingdom of heaven with everyone we meet, even the stranger, the one who is different, the one who is not laughing, the one who is always in the background, the bullies, the victims and those who are desperately reaching out for help!

May we go from here and pray that no culture or prejudice will silence our voices which are speaking out that our Saviour Jesus Christ is not dead but alive and reigns forever and ever!

Amen

