

Campus: Cheltenham
Ps Charles Widdowson
19 & 20 April 2014

HOPE SERIES (3)

HOPE: BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION

Message Notes

Text: Mark 16: 1-4

That stone ... the stone that was incredibly rolled away from the opening to Jesus' tomb ... is one of the great symbols of the resurrection, and of the SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE we can have in God!

How could it have been rolled away?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all have reasons but only two things are important: when the women arrived, the stone was rolled away and it was a **VERY LARGE** stone that had been placed there ... by order of Pontius Pilate ... the Governor.

Some priests and Pharisees had gone to Pilate and reminded him that Jesus had said that after three days He would be raised ... and they said Jesus' disciples might steal the body and spread the rumour that Jesus **HAD** risen again.

So to stop the rumour ... the stone was placed ... and it was a **VERY LARGE** stone and it was moved . . . **MOVED BY THE POWER OF GOD . . .**

THE POWER OF GOD HAD ROLLED THAT VERY LARGE STONE . . . PLACED THERE BY MAN . . . AWAY!

However ... this **VERY LARGE** stone ... was not the only stone that was removed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... there were others ... many others!

We'll only have time to deal with three - but they are three of the **VERY LARGEST** stones that we can encounter.

THE VERY LARGE STONE OF DOUBT

Not only did a stone block Jesus' grave ... but Peter ... had a stone that needed to be moved ... a massive mill-stone around his neck!!!!!!!

Can we even begin to image how Peter felt when he awoke that first Easter morning ... if he ever slept!

- a) Mind in a whirl!
- b) He'd said: "Master, I'm ready for anything with You. I'd go to jail for You. I'd die for You!"
- c) then ... HE'D DENIED JESUS ... not once ... not twice ... but three times ... **AND THE ROOSTER CROWED!**
- d) and there was that look from Jesus as He was led ... bound ... from the Council Chamber.

The **VERY LARGE** stone that blocked Peter's life ... was a mill-stone of **DOUBT**.

Doubt about Jesus and doubt about himself ... he'd left all ... he now had so little: his proud boasts in the past, his part in these last frightful hours, was God going to use him, after this? Was he **FIT** for anything?

What about us?

Is it really worth the cost ... being a Christian?

Yes! Until early on that Easter morning a **VERY LARGE** stone blocked Peter's life ... and **it was a VERY LARGE STONE OF DOUBT**.

BUT SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE IN GOD ROLLED THAT VERY LARGE STONE OF DOUBT AWAY. WHY?

PETER NEEDED TO GET RID OF HIS DOUBT AND TO REFRESH HIS HOPE IN AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD with Whom nothing is impossible!

Father God rolled it away from Peter - and He will roll it away from you and me.

THE VERY LARGE STONE OF DESPAIR

Not only Peter ... but the women, also ... had a **VERY LARGE** stone blocking their lives. It was a **VERY LARGE STONE OF DESPAIR!** They had wanted to do so much ... and had been able to do so little!

But it had been moved ... and the tomb was *empty!* Can we even begin to imagine the **despair** that gripped their hearts? ... their Lord's body GONE!

UTTER DESPAIR!

Well ... for Peter ... and for the women **DOUBT** and **DESPAIR** were dismissed ... the **VERY LARGE** stone that had blocked their lives ... the millstone ... was gone.

BUT THE RESURRECTION POWER OF GOD ROLLED THAT VERY LARGE STONE OF DESPAIR AWAY FOR THE SAME REASON AS BEFORE.

TO GET RID OF HIS DESPAIR AND TO REFRESH HIS HOPE IN AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD with Whom nothing is impossible!

Father God rolled it away from Peter – to refresh his entire future . .

Father God rolled it away from the three women – to refresh their entire future . . .

and Father God will roll it away from you and me – to refresh our entire future!

And when they ran to tell the disciples ... and Peter rushed to the empty tomb ... and **SAW!** ... and later Jesus appeared to all the disciples in the Upper Room ... his **DOUBT and DESPAIR** turned into glorious belief.

THE VERY LARGE STONE OF DEATH

John 11: 25-26 in The Message version.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

FAMILY, IT IS BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR PRECIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST – AND THE SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE WE HAVE IN FATHER GOD AND HIS LOVE ... the VERY LARGE stones ... the mill-stones ... of **DOUBT, DESPAIR and DEATH** ... have been **ROLLED AWAY** – SO THAT WE, TOO, CAN BE REFRESHED IN HOPE, IN FAITH – and in so much more!

THERE IS NO MORE REFRESHING TIME, FOR GOD'S CHILDREN – YOU AND ME - THAN EASTER!

What a glorious message for *every* morning of *every* day ... a message to set our hearts alight and on fire with love for our **PRECIOUS RISEN LORD** ...

NO MATTER WHAT VERY LARGE STONES ARE BLOCKING YOUR LIFE

NO MATTER WHAT MILL STONES ARE HANGING ROUND YOUR NECKS

OR THOSE OF ANY OF OUR LOVED ONES . . . or friends etc

JESUS ROLLED THEM ALL AWAY ON RESURRECTION MORNING!

THE WAY TO HIM IS WIDE OPEN ... AS WIDE OPEN AS THAT GRAVE ... BECAUSE OUR JESUS IS ALIVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Read 1 Corinthians 15: 20-22 in the New Living Translation - **HERE is our sure and certain HOPE: BECAUSE OF THE RESURECTION!**

HALLELUJAH!