

EASTER DAY – 2014

ACTS 10:34-43 them would see Jesus again face to face.
JOHN 20:1-18

TAKING HIM AT HIS WORD

For Mary, there had been a hundred and one reasons to give up on God through her parenthood. There had been a hundred and one occasions to ask ‘*What’s the point?*’ There are all sorts of circumstances that make it seem as if God is not worth bothering with. It’s not logical to trust through all that struggle.

She received her fair share of scorn, no doubt, at the scandal of being pregnant and not married. She went through the pain of birth in some kind of cave or shed. She presented her child at the temple and was told that ‘a sword’ would pierce her own heart because of him. After the trials and joys of watching her son through the years, now she had seen him killed horribly. Last of all, she finds his body gone. There is something utterly distasteful about people who can’t even respect the dead and damage graves. Mary has to experience it all.

No wonder she can’t think straight when the risen Jesus appears to her. Finally she realizes it’s him. It only takes a few moments. Faith burns brighter. There’s a purpose, there *is* a point to life. But it’s not immediately easy and she’s not going to be allowed to hold onto the moment or to her son for ever.

But notice a couple of important things that can help us.

First, I don’t think the disciples or Mary instantly understood why everything had happened. ‘*The other disciple...saw and believed. They still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead*’ (v.8). Mary told the disciples the news that she had seen the Lord – but then what? Did they know what to do next? Did they instantly know what was round the corner for them or just what it meant? I don’t think so.

Secondly, I guess that most things about the disciples’ and Mary’s circumstances didn’t change. The disciples ‘*went back to their homes*’ (v.10). They were still in fear of the Jews. Most of them would not now be instant heroes or become very rich. All of them would die. Some would be persecuted, some would struggle with their work or their relationships. Apart from the next few weeks, none of

Resurrection did not mean a sudden understanding and new, comfortable circumstances. But it did mean there was a point to life and it meant you could trust God, in spite of everything going on in your life, whether you could work it out or not.

Resurrection is not about logical things. Jesus said he would overcome death and he did. You can take him at his word.

There are many reasons to doubt the goodness of God for every individual here (as well as many reasons to be assured of his goodness that are equally hard to explain!)

We may not understand. We may not enjoy our circumstances. But the joy of resurrection is that God’s love and power are proved. Life is valuable. Life in heaven is assured. There is a point. We can take him at his word.