

I'd like to begin with a big question. It may not apply to you – I'll let you decide: if I told you, if I testified, that there is infinitely more to the resurrection of Jesus Christ than believing and celebrating something we can't see, would you be curious enough to go in search of this ***infinite more?***

I ask because I can remember a time as a teenager when I began to doubt whether this Jesus stuff was real. Our family had gone to Mass my whole life, but apart from showing up every Sunday, I didn't have a foundation for my faith beyond what I'd been told to believe. Does that resonate? What do you think happened when I left home and started making my own decisions? I didn't stop believing but stopped practising what I believed.

Some people move through that stage and hold firmly to what they've been given – and that's a beautiful thing – but ***what*** I was missing back then was a reference point, a way of recognising ***how*** the risen Jesus was actually present in my life.

In a way, that's not so different from how the two Mary's respond to the Resurrection in the Gospel. Something extraordinary happened – the tomb was empty and the angel spoke – but the women's response didn't begin with certainty. It began with fear and confusion – even the guards were paralysed with fear. When the angel spoke the very first words of the Resurrection, he said to the women, *Do not be afraid, Jesus is risen from the dead, but don't keep it to yourselves. Go and **tell** the disciples that they will see me in Galilee. I have told you this, now go and do the same.* What was their response to this encounter with the angel and Jesus? They left the tomb – and this is key – ***“filled with awe and great joy.”*** Not just joy – but ***great*** joy... “Wow, did you see (hear/experience) that?”

That's the detail that's given to draw us in to a new foundation of knowledge – not just head knowledge, but heart knowledge – of **how** Jesus is risen so that the resurrection isn't a dry belief or a distant idea, but a great joy, love or peace that **moves** us into wonder and awe.

I've tasted this at different times in my life – as have a growing number of people in this congregation. Moments – often unexpected – when in prayer, I've been open to Jesus' presence and the sound of His voice, and then found myself **filled with gifts of awe and great joy**. It's an experience that offers the unmistakable sense that He is real, present, and active in the here and now. It happened on Thursday night at the Mass of the Lord's supper up in Maleny. During the consecration of the bread and wine, the congregation was so silent that there was a powerful Presence which many people experienced. It was as though Jesus himself was saying, I am here. I am with you. But I've also noticed the opposite too. When I'm closed, distracted, or doubtful... I tend not to notice Him at all.

Friends, this is where the Gospel meets us today. In every generation for the last 2000 years, people have **heard** the message of Jesus. But today, simply hearing it isn't always enough. People don't just want to be told that something is true—they want to experience that it is true.

So this Easter, let's not settle for simply remembering the Resurrection. Let's be open to and ask for an encounter with the risen Jesus. If you're comfortable in this moment, and by way of conclusion, I invite you to close your eyes, open your palms to receive, and make this prayer your own: Come Lord Jesus, risen and present in our midst, fill us with awe and great joy. Open our **eyes** to recognise you, our **ears** to hear you, our **hearts** to encounter you, and

our ***lives*** to follow you, that we may ***go*** and ***share*** the great joy we have received. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.