

# The forgiving judge

## Acts 10:34-43

### 1. an astounding event...

An empty tomb... the stone rolled away... strange messengers greeting bewildered women... a man dead 3 days suddenly appearing... showing the wounds from his death by crucifixion... speaking, eating, teaching for some 40 days... ascending to heaven having never died again...

It doesn't take much thought to realise that on Easter Sunday we are thinking about an incredible event.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

An astounding event...

so astounding of course that the vast majority of people in our world can't believe it. The vast majority of people in our country... in our city... in our neighbourhood... can't believe it.

In fact, tragically, it's not all that difficult to find even religious people... people who wear religious clothes & bear religious titles... there are even people like that who find the claim that Jesus was raised from the dead too embarrassing... too difficult... to believe.

It is an astounding event (an incredible event) that has gathered us together TODAY/TONIGHT.

And I'm certain that there would be a variety of opinions among us about the resurrection of Jesus....about whether or not he really rose & about whether or not it really matters if he did.

However when we come to Bible we discover that according to it:-

Yes, Jesus truly rose from the dead & that

Yes it matters enormously that he did.

And that's why I'd like us to spend a short time considering one part of the Bible where we discover that.

For whatever opinions & beliefs we might hold about the resurrection of Jesus,

we need to test them... we need to make sure that they are worth holding...

For God warns us that to get it wrong about the resurrection of Jesus is disastrous & carries with it eternal consequences.

Some beliefs are like that aren't they?

Whether or not your belief is right really matters... it has consequences.

If you believe that you can fly... that will have terrible consequences the next time you jump off your roof... & your belief is wrong.

According to God, your opinion, your belief, about what happened to Jesus on that first Easter, really matters...

whether your belief is right or wrong has serious consequences.

So at the very least I'd like us to spend some time together now making sure of what we think about Jesus & what happened after he died.

The part of the Bible we're going to look at together comes from Acts Chp 10. The book of Acts is a description of the things that happened after Jesus ascended to heaven.

Its human author is Luke, who also wrote the description of the events of the resurrection that we read through together earlier.

We're joining the action of Acts at a time where the apostle Peter is about to pass onto a group of people the facts about Jesus' resurrection & the meaning of those facts. Even though this speech of Peter's took place some 2000 years ago when all these events first happened... the answers Peter gives are as important & as vital to us here TODAY/TONIGHT as they were to Peter's original audience back then.

**\*\* Acts 10:39-43 \*\* [bulletin]**

The facts about Easter Sunday & the meaning of those facts. That's what Peter spelt out... and that's what we'll spend a short time looking at together.

Firstly then, the facts... [outline]

## 2. the facts (vv39-41)

### (• Jesus was dead but was raised & seen)

Its important to realise that when we are talking about the life, the death & the resurrection of Jesus we can talk about facts.

Not myth, not fantasy, not make believe, not fiction... but facts.

Cold hard historical facts.

The Easter bunny is not real.

Sorry to be so blunt.

But I wonder whether we sometimes lump the stuff to do with Jesus in with the Easter bunny & the tooth fairy & all the other stories that are nice to believe but that we know are not really real.

Don't make that mistake will you!

Jesus of a Nazareth was a real person who really lived, who died a real death & really rose from the dead.

All that is fact.

And we can know these facts because of the testimony of eye witnesses.

Look again at what Peter said:-

**\*\* 10:39a \*\***

We know the importance of eye witness testimony.

One of the most dramatic moments in court room trials is when a witness describes in detail the crime that he or she saw & then points confidently toward the defendant as being the perpetrator.

The importance of eye witnesses is seen in the need for witness protection schemes...

But its not just in the court room setting is it...  
when someone can tell you that they saw something with their own eyes their testimony  
takes on much more power, much more significance...  
they saw it... it must be true.

And in the same way, Peter was a witness to everything Jesus did.  
And most especially he & the other disciples were eye witnesses to the fact that Jesus was  
dead but alive again on the 3rd day.

**\*\* 10:39-41 \*\***

The things Peter was reporting there we heard in those earlier Bible readings.  
After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples, he talked with them, he  
allowed them to touch him... they felt his flesh & bones so that they could be sure he wasn't  
a ghost... he ate with them.

Its a long time between now & when these things happened but it would be ridiculous to think  
that people back then would not have been surprised by a dead man walking & talking  
& eating.  
Of course they would have been... & not just surprised but very skeptical.  
Even the disciples had trouble believing it.

That is why God chose witnesses to testify to the truth of such an amazing event.  
These days its not uncommon to find someone who will say "Well I'd believe Jesus rose from  
the dead if I could see him."  
But I think its interesting there in v41 that Peter is very up front in admitting that not everyone  
saw Jesus...

Lots did... for 40 days Jesus was seen... he once even appeared to 500 people at the  
same time...  
but "he was not seen by all the people" said Peter, "but by witnesses whom God had all  
ready chosen- by us (the disciples) who ate & drank with him after he rose from the dead."

The historical fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead rests on the testimony of those  
people God chose as eye witnesses.  
People like Peter.  
And we find their written testimony here in the Bible.  
We are listening to it this very morning.

And it is very compelling.  
People who take the time to read it & think it through find it compelling.  
It more than stands up to the test of historical truth.  
Frank Morrison, an English barrister in the 1930's, was so tired of Christians talking of the  
resurrection of Jesus that he determined to write a book correcting their error & setting forth  
the truth.  
But in his first chapter, entitled, "The Book that refused to be written", he confesses that as  
he sifted through the evidence, as he measured the testimony of the disciples, against his  
will almost, he came to see that it was true.  
And so his book "Who Moved the Stone?" sets out the many evidences for the resurrection  
of Jesus.

Or there is the remarkable instance of a leading modern scholar of history, Dr Pinchas Lapide, who is definitely not a Christian man...

but who in examining the testimony of Peter & the other disciples came to this conclusion:-  
“According to my opinion, the resurrection belongs to the category of the truly real... A fact...”#

If you've never considered the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus can I suggest that you do.

If you'd like to know how you might go about considering that evidence come & see me over MT/supper... I'd be happy to help you out.

It rests on the eye witness testimony of those whom God chose... & its very compelling.  
It is fact, not fiction.

Jesus was killed, but on the 3rd day God raised him from the dead & caused him to be seen.  
They are the facts.

But what is more important than what they are is what those facts mean.

Which Peter went on to explain. [outline]

### 3. the meaning of the facts (vv42-43)

#### • Jesus is the Judge of the living & the dead

\*\* 10:42 \*\*

What is the meaning of the resurrection?

And we can see it there in v42 can't we?...

Its that Jesus is the one whom God has appointed as judge of the living & the dead.

You see as the ruler of this world, God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

All of us would agree I'm sure that this world is messed up.

Well God has promised a day in which every wrong will be righted.

A day on which the world will be cleaned up once & for all.

I often hear people asking why God doesn't do something to fix up the world.

Well he will... he's promised a day on which he will do exactly that.

That day will be the day of judgment.

And in raising Jesus from the dead, God has appointed him to be that judge.

On that day, Jesus will return, and all people will come before him as their Judge.

My youngest son is in kindergarten & every week someone in the class is appointed as star of the week.

When you're star of the week you get to lead the class whenever they walk places around the school... you get to do special jobs for the teacher...

its an important job... its an important appointment...

and so when you are star of the week you get to wear a badge for everyone to see ...

its got a big star on it & a smiley face and across the badge it says, of course, "Star of the Week!"

The resurrection is God's declaration to the entire world that Jesus has been appointed to the most important & powerful job you could possibly imagine....

Jesus will be the judge of every single person... both the living & the dead...

Everyone will come before Jesus on the day that God has set...

And on that day Jesus will determine whether you enjoy an eternity of life or condemnation.

Hard to imagine a more important job, a more important appointment don't you think?  
If you've ever wondered what the resurrection of Jesus has got to do with you.  
Here's your answer... on that final day you will come before the resurrected Jesus as your judge.

How do you think you'll go?  
I'm sorry to be a little heavy but some questions have got to be faced haven't they?  
No good thinking about it on that final day... too late then... we need to think about it now.  
How do you think you'll go... standing before the risen Jesus as your judge on that final day?

It'd be terrible to not be sure about the answer to that one wouldn't it?  
Whether my eternity will be one of life or condemnation... it'd be awful to be uncertain about that...

God is very plain in his word to us, the Bible...  
Terribly plain in fact...  
for he warns us that if we face that judgment day on our own,  
we will certainly be found to be guilty.  
Not some of us... all of us... guilty... condemned.  
Because you see... according to God... all of us fail in our most fundamental responsibility...  
We fail to love & honour & obey God in the way that is right.  
That doesn't mean we're terrible people necessarily...  
But it does mean that deep down each one of us carries this desire to be independent of God...  
To put ourselves, & our plans & our desires above him.  
Its wrong.  
Its what God in his Word to us calls sin.

And because of our sin ... on that day of judgment we only deserve to be condemned... for God is just & we are guilty.

That may be difficult for you to hear.  
It may be difficult for you to accept.  
But I am only passing on what God says to each one of us in his Word the Bible.

Its bad news... but you see unless we can hear & accept the *bad* news we won't understand or appreciate the *good* news.  
For there is good news... great news... fantastic news...  
As Peter goes on to explain in v43...

## • Our sins can be forgiven through believing in Jesus

\*\* 10:43 \*\*

That is good news isn't it?!

Once again that word testify pops up.  
But this time its the prophets, the OT scriptures, who testify...  
and what a testimony it is!  
Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

For Jesus in his death & resurrection, has made it possible for our sins to be dealt with before that day of Judgment arrives.

Easter time is a time when people start thinking about bunnies.  
Its interesting that in the Macquarie Dictionary if you look up the word “bunny” one of the definitions you discover is this:-  
“one who accepts the responsibility for a situation, sometimes willingly.”

And so sometimes people say something like “I’m the bunny left to deal with it.”

Folks, when Jesus died on the cross, that first good Friday, he accepted the responsibility for our sins.

He did so willingly.

Our sins rightly attract God’s judgment, God’s condemnation.

And on that cross God’s judgment & condemnation was poured out on Jesus.

But he didn’t deserve it... for unlike us he never sinned, ...he was innocent... he was the Son of God...

but because he loves us, & because there was no other way to help us...

he willingly accepted the responsibility & the punishment for our sin.

And his resurrection proved his success.

His resurrection demonstrated that there is now a way for our sin to be dealt with.

There is now a way for our sins to be forgiven...

In his death in our place, Jesus served the sentence of condemnation that is rightly ours...

So that now its possible on that final day of judgment to be spared...

\*\* 10:43 \*\*

#### 4. the right response to the facts (v43)

Friends this morning/evening we’re thinking about an astounding event of long ago.

But here are the facts.

Jesus was dead but he was raised & seen.

He lives today/tonight!

He is risen!

Do those facts matter?

Absolutely!

They matter to every single one of us in this room... & they matter to every single person who is alive & who has ever lived!

For the resurrection of Jesus means that he is the Judge of the living & the dead.

Every one is answerable to him for their sin.

But he is not just the Judge of the last day.

He is the one in whom we can find forgiveness today/tonight.

Forgiveness of the very sin that ought to condemn us.

Friends it all swings on your response.

Verse 43 is very clear.

Everyone who “believes in Jesus” receives forgiveness of sins.

When you've understood the facts & what they mean its really the only sensible response isn't it?

The only right response is to put your confidence in Jesus' death to deal with your sins...

The only response that makes sense is to order & arrange your life around the risen Jesus... to live for him... in everything.

That is the right response.

To believe in Jesus.

And if that is your response....

on that final day of judgment you will be able to look into the face your judge, the risen Jesus, Lord of all,

and you will see the one who has saved you, you one who loves you, the one who died in your place so that you might be forgiven.

And he will welcome you into life everlasting.