

The Divine Extra (Matthew 28:1-10)

9:30am Easter Sunday – 5th April 2026

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

Glory to you O Lord

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’

⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

This is the gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ

<Prayer>

Spring is coming on nicely, and around about now I start to get out my shorts, and most especially my consumption of ice-cream goes up. I am a big kid. What ever happened to those musical ice-cream vans that used to drive around our neighbourhoods?

I'm sure that years ago I assumed a '99' cost just that - 99p (does everybody know what I mean by that?) Did it ever? I think it's now the 499! In my house it's known as Mr Whippy – because of the local ice-cream vans of my childhood. That lovely smooth ice cream is incomplete without the chocolate stick. If I gave you a Mr Whippy without the flake, you would feel robbed, wouldn't you? Incomplete! **It would be like the cross without the resurrection!** On Easter Day I think of the resurrection just like that - the indispensable best bit of our faith – **the essential divine extra.**

Easter is all about seeing the bigger picture of Jesus. All the gospels have a huge extra focus on the cross and resurrection. **Indeed, the resurrection is the Christian Faith.** If you read the gospels in the light of Easter, then everything else makes sense.

Christians have always believed that Jesus would be the final sacrifice for all our sin, and everything which defines the troubled human soul. But that isn't always easy to understand. Individually, we don't like to think of ourselves as wrong or immoral or even wicked. We certainly would not want anyone else telling us that. But when you look across all of society collectively, there is a lot which is wrong or worse. It's undeniable. **When we think of sin we should think of the sinfulness of all humanity, more than the individual mistakes we have made.** Jesus died for us *all together* as a representative of *all humanity*.

Yet from death, Jesus would show how sin, and our own inevitable end, is now defeated. From that first glorious Easter Day would come a new hope that we are still trying to fathom even now. It does not need to be said of the world that it is hopeless – only ever getting worse. **There is a divine extra available.**

What happened in one place a very long time ago, ever since has lost none of its power to raise up hope for the world. The very reason I became a Christian at all, in my mid-twenties – was because I could not explain how such a story could yet change the course of history and be so inspiring and enduring that people would dedicate their whole lives to Christ. I now know that all of this is because of the presence of God's Holy Spirit in the Church, and available to all who seek it for their lives. **I felt I needed to go beyond the world – it was that divine extra I was looking for.** Perhaps in that I may be no different to you.

Beginning seven days ago – from Palm Sunday – this has been Holy Week. On that great occasion, Jesus is welcomed into the city as the coming King, having built a huge reputation as a radical miracle working figure of hope and love. They shouted him in - ***Hosanna to the Son of David – Hosanna in the Highest.*** Riding on a donkey, palm branches were laid down as the recognisable symbols of the Messiah. **The people wanted a new hope – a way out of what they were living. They needed something more.**

From there, Jesus and His disciples visited the Temple several times - teaching, being followed, being questioned and seeing Him turning over the tables of the money changers in a fit of anger. These were the days of Jesus's most withering exchanges with the religious authorities, leaving Him with many enemies (particularly amongst the most powerful). And all the time the Romans and

Pontius Pilate are watching, themselves becoming very concerned at the mounting tension, perhaps leading to some kind of riot or uprising. The Temple authorities and the High Priest wanted Jesus dead, Pilate wants no revolution, but they do not agree.

Jesus shares a Last Supper with the twelve disciples, one of whom betrays him in a bungled attempt to break what seems like an inevitable deadly clash. **Jesus had been saying all week that it had to end this way**, but the disciples still did not seem to understand why it should end in death. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is found praying, arrested and then paraded between the High Priest, King Herod and Pontius Pilate, with no-one quite knowing what to do next. Finally, the temple authorities turn the crowds with shouts of *Crucify Him!*, much to the alarm of Pilate, who finally, reluctantly, agrees to have Jesus crucified.

Jesus is paraded to his death in a grotesque spectacle of theatrical malice, with a crown of thorns, then nailed to the cross. Even the Roman guards responsible, seem to be unsure – *maybe this man really was the Son of God?* The curtain into the most holy inner sanctum of the temple is torn in two, the earth shakes and the skies thunder. In darkness the body of Jesus is laid in a tomb carved out of the rock, and a stone rolled over the entrance. The disciples hide in fear, recognised as those who accompanied Jesus – they were marked men. But the women – the two Marys - go to the tomb on the third day, with the Sabbath festival now finished, to complete the burial customs. **No one can quite believe what has happened, it was surely a disastrous end.**

But we know what happened next. **The incredible divine extra.**
The gospel of Matthew tells us:

‘Suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.’

From there Jesus was seen and believed in throughout the world, beginning from Jerusalem. The women are told to go, without fear, as the risen Jesus himself tells them. **The rest is history, and we are still in it.**

My message to you today is a simple one. We shall all live until the point of death – all of us, and that included Jesus too. But our lives do not have to end there. Just the same as the life of Jesus, as told in the gospels, all made sense in the end, so I ask you – what sense is your life and to what end? **I say to you now that the resurrection is the greatest point of departure from that dreadful normal.** The resurrection is the extra.

Don’t allow your life to be limited to the apparent hopelessness of the world. **Maybe you too need to go beyond the world – to take the divine as much more, as the farthest point of your life.**

My work here is help you to do that, and here is my invitation to you individually – come and speak to me. I will spend time with you. I have time for that. We can even share an ice cream if you like, with chocolate stick too. **I want you to have more than you have now, in this life and the life to come. The resurrection is the Christian Faith, it is the divine extra.**

Amen