

Easter Sunday Luke 24:1-12, 36-53: "Expect the unexpected"

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PPT – In our world today, you can often expect the unexpected.

III – Look at these amazing unexpected inventions:

PPT – The butter stick

PPT – The noodle cooler

PPT – The noodle hair guard

PPT – The personal rain saver

PPT – The hands free mobile phone

PPT – Every day, we can expect the unexpected.

Except, perhaps, when it comes to God. That's always a bit harder. Like in this Easter story from Luke 24.

The women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' dead crucified body with spices, and they find the stone of the tomb already rolled away. Unexpected. They step inside and did not find Jesus' body. Unexpected. Two angels appear in front of them. Unexpected. These shining men tell them "He's not here! He is risen." Unexpected.

Then these angels say to them "Remember how he told you 'the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Then they remembered his words."

And so these women go back and tell the disciples, and THEY did not believe the words of the women. It was too "unexpected". So Peter got up and ran to the tomb and saw the empty tomb. Unexpected. He went inside the tomb and saw the empty strips of linen. Unexpected. And he went away wondering what had happened!

III – Hot cross buns

PPT – I absolutely **love** hot cross buns. I **can't wait** until they come out in the shops. But a few years ago, something even better came out – something very unexpected – choc chip hot cross buns! Possibly the most exciting thing since the noodle cooler.

PPT – Now, imagine that I go to Baker's delight and ask for a Hot Cross bun. And they say: "Would you like a chocolate chip one?" And I reply "What are you talking about? There's no such thing! And they say: "Well, we've been advertising these for months on the TV. And here's one for you to see for yourself! Look! Here it is. Do you want it? And I turn around and I see the people behind me and I say to them: "They've got choc chip hot cross buns! And the people behind me look over the counter and see it and say: "No! It can't be true! There's no such thing! And all of us walk away, without the choc chip hot cross buns and we're wondering to ourselves: "What's going on? How can this be? How can hot cross buns have choc chips? It's impossible!" And we walk away empty handed and confused.

Well, that's the reaction from the disciples when they see Jesus alive again. First, there's an empty tomb. Then there are two angels. A few women are the first witnesses. Then Peter sees the empty tomb and the strips of linen. And then... verse 36:

PPT – ³⁶While they (the disciples) were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

PPT – ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹And while they **still did not believe** it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

The disciples saw him killed. Then there's an empty tomb. Angels. Strips of linen. Witnesses. Then he appears himself. And speaks. LOOK at my hands and feet. Give me something to eat – see! I am alive. Physical body. REAL resurrection. And by the way – remember – I TOLD YOU that this was going to happen! And here I am. Flesh and bones. NOW will you believe?

It is one thing to EXPECT the unexpected. It is another thing to ACCEPT the unexpected when it happens.

The disciples lived with Jesus for 3 years. They heard him say again and again that he was going to be handed over to be killed and then rise again from the dead. But when it happened, they didn't expect it. They didn't expect the body to be gone. They didn't expect him to turn up in the room during morning tea. They didn't expect to be able to see the nail marks in his hands and the hole in his side. They didn't expect to see him eat, to hear him speak, or to touch him and hold him.

It was completely unexpected. But then, finally, they accepted it.

PPT – Verse 51: ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²**Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.**

They worshipped him. It was unexpected. But they accepted. Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and they accepted.

III – Rudd money.

You know, I didn't expect to get a few thousand dollars for free from the government this month. It was unexpected. But guess what? It arrived. And I accepted it! I didn't expect to go to the shops the other day and see chocolate for \$2 a block! But I did, and I accepted that price and I bought 5 blocks. Then ate them. There are many things in this world that are unexpected. But that doesn't mean we just reject them. If something is unexpected, we still need to consider it and decide whether to accept it or not.

So what does it mean to **accept** the death and resurrection of Jesus?

III – Have you ever thought, if you were lying on your death bed, about to die any moment, who you would want to hold your hand? I have had the privilege to visit many people who are close to death. And it doesn't matter if they're young or old, male or female. It's always a comfort, when you're dying, to be able to hold someone's hand. As **you** face death, and unless Jesus returns first, we will all certainly come to that point in our life, whose hand would you like to hold as you go to the grave?

A lot of people will go to the grave holding their own hand. Trusting that they've lived a good enough life for God. Or trusting in the idea that perhaps one day everyone will end up in heaven anyway. That it doesn't matter who you follow or what you believe. It doesn't matter as long as you believe in A god. It doesn't matter whose hand you hold in death. Many people will face death holding their own hand with their fingers crossed. I think that is a frightening way to die. Let me tell you why:

PPT – From verse 45: ⁴⁵Then he (Jesus) opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷**and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**"

Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in **his** name.

Repentance. Forgiveness. In the name of ... Jesus.

Accepting Jesus means accepting that we need to repent and be forgiven **by him**. To repent – to turn away from holding our own hand, and to hold **his** hand. To stop going **our** way. And start going **his** way. And to ask **him** for forgiveness.

III – When my Nana was dying from cancer, my oldest brother went to visit her and he had his 3 children with him. And the children waited outside while he visited her.

PPT – While they were outside, they made daisy chains with the daisies they found outside. Then my Nana said she would really love to see the kids. The kids came in and Luke, the youngest at 4 years old, was holding his daisy chain. Nana said “What have you got there?” He said “It’s a daisy chain. Here – you can have it. You can wear it when you meet Jesus.” And he gave it to her. And she died that afternoon.

Luke knew exactly what dying meant. It means you’re going to meet Jesus. Lord and King and Judge of all. We need to be prepared to meet Jesus. You will face **him**. You will answer **him**. Just as the disciples and the women did that Easter morning. With the nail marks in his hands and feet, and the hole in his side. Have you repented and gone **HIS** way? Have you been forgiven by **HIM**? Have you trusted in **HIS** blood shed on the cross?

It’s one thing to **expect** the unexpected. Like a man rising from the dead. It’s another thing to **accept** it. To **accept** Jesus as Lord. To **accept** he is the one with the power over sin and death. That he is the one we will answer to.

PPT – When you face death, in those final moments, whose hand will you be holding into eternity? Will you be holding the hand that leads you to eternal life? ...

Maybe you’ve already turned to Jesus. Maybe you’ve already accepted him as Lord. Maybe you’re sick of hearing Easter sermons about the same old things! Well, let me ask you a simple question – whose hand are you holding **today**? Right now? Who are you trusting? Who are you following?

Easter is a great day to ask yourself that question again – who am I holding on to? Who, or what, am I really trusting in?

Maybe you’re juggling a lot of things. Family. Work. Marriage. School. Friends. Finances. Sometimes we lose our grip on Jesus’ hand. Yet his is the hand that bears the nail marks from the cross. The cross where he died for us. The cross that took away our sins. The cross marked with his blood. That’s the hand we need to hold on to every day. Every moment. The hand of forgiveness. This Easter, how about grabbing hold of Jesus’ hand again? And perhaps letting go of a few other things that might have become a bit more important than him?

Let’s pray and do that now.