

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – Easter Sunday

**John 20:1-10**

**THE BEGINNING OF THE END**

You may well be familiar with the award winning and popular children's book, 'Who Sank the Boat?'. It is written by Pamela Allen and was first published in 1982. The book uses a story to explain Archimedes' principle of buoyancy, ie, how things float when the force from above is balanced by the force from below. In the story, a cow, a donkey, a sheep, a pig, and a tiny little mouse are preparing to hop into a boat, and the question asked right at the beginning is, 'who sank the boat?' Of course, as the book goes through it is none of the bigger animals who sink the boat when they get in, as we would expect, but the tiny little mouse who hops in at the end is the one who sends all the others sprawling into the water. It is a great book, and teaches a number of principles which can be applied to life, one of which is that it's not always the big and spectacular things which cause something to happen, but with everything being set up it can be the small and the quiet things which bring the tipping point. In a way it also illustrates the saying we often use of 'the straw which broke the camel's back'.

This is a principle we can apply to many parts of life, and history. In our lives, we may have a number of big things happen which challenge us and push our limits, but after weathering them it can be something relatively small, something we wouldn't normally be really bothered about, which can push us over the edge. In history there are always debates about whether a war was started by this or that hostile act, or if a pandemic was the result of a deliberate action, or whether a financial crisis was brought on by the collapse of one or more large companies, etc. And while all these things may have been major contributors to what ended up happening, indeed it probably wouldn't have happened without them, the event, or occurrence, or action, which saw the result of all these things move from something which might happen, to something which does, is often so small, so quiet, so unnoticed, that we never really identify what it actually was.

The events which make up God's saving plan to save all His people and bring them back to Him go back thousands of years; in fact, right back to when the first two people, Adam and Eve, first sinned in deciding they wanted to be like God. If you think back on those events you'll probably think of the Flood, battles in the Old Testament which God enabled His people to win against impossible odds, the Passover and going from slavery to the Promised Land, and ordinary people who did extra ordinary things because they were chosen and led by God. In Jesus' own life, although His birth was in a lowly cattle shed it was heralded by a choir of angels, and there are many spectacular miracles He performed; walking on water and calming a storm, casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead including Lazarus who came out of His tomb after three days still wrapped in His burial cloths. We have so much detail in the Bible about the last week of Jesus' life; beginning with His arrival as a king on Palm Sunday, going through to His Passover dinner with His disciples, praying in the garden, His arrest, trial, and then His death on the cross for our sakes. These are all events we can picture because we are told so much about them.

In many ways the event we celebrate today, Jesus' rising from the dead, is a bit like the tiny mouse who sank the boat. Take away our knowledge looking back on what this means, and there's not much to it. It is recorded in all four Gospels, but can come across even as an afterthought. In fact, whenever I watch a dramatization of the Easter story, something like the Mel Gibson movie *'The Passion of the Christ'*, or the Moogerah Dam Passion Play, my comment upon leaving normally is, 'I don't think they focused enough on the resurrection of Jesus; it just happened and that was it'. After everything else that has been presented it's just very quietly done. I really don't know what I expect, because when I think back on it, that's how it is recorded as happening in the Bible. Take the version we have today from John's Gospel: We don't know how the stone was rolled away, and it is very hard to picture Jesus suddenly rising up, stretching, and then unwrapping the burial cloths and leaving them neatly behind. The only other people John has in his version are Mary Magdelene, who upon seeing the stone rolled away thinks the worst and runs straight off, and Peter and John who base their faith on going into the

tomb and seeing nothing there. In comparison to some other events not just in the life of Jesus, but in the whole history of God and His people, it is very small, and very quiet.

And yet, in what happened on that Easter Sunday morning, with Jesus rising from the grave, we have the tipping point, the straw that broke the camel's back, the tiny mouse who sank the boat, whatever you want to call it, as all of God's plans to forgive, save, and bring us back to Him were completed. All those other events from the Old Testament and Jesus' life are important and necessary, especially Jesus' birth as the Son of God, His death, and His ascending back into heaven. But the event of His rising from the dead, as quiet as it was, as unexpected even by those closest to Him, this is the beginning of the end. This is the crossroads when what God had promised for so long moves from a plan into completion. I remember many years ago going to an Australian Scout Jamboree in Broken Hill over an Easter weekend. On Easter Sunday morning a pastor/chaplain conducted a service for several thousand scouts and leaders, most of whom probably had very little to do with God stuff. He obviously did it very well, because I remember Him saying that day that if you can disprove that Jesus rose from the dead please come and see him, because together you and he could make a lot of money pulling down two thousand years of the Christian faith. But, he said, you won't be able to do it; many have tried, none have succeeded. He said that our Christian faith, our hope, our joy, everything God offers us through Jesus all hinges around the event of the resurrection. They are words I have thought of many times since whenever I think about the events of the first Easter Sunday morning and what they now mean for us.

The beginning of the end. Because Jesus lives, we also will live. These are words we repeat in a funeral service to give us hope at the death of a loved one, but we can apply them to all of our life. The new life we have in Jesus doesn't just refer to eternal life after we die in this life, but the life we live in Jesus right now. The life in which our guilt is taken from us by Jesus' death, the depth God's love is shown to us by sending His Son to die and rise again, and the knowledge that by God's love we are now joined to the new life Jesus has won for us. At the beginning of our reading it says, 'while it was still dark...'. They are words we can apply not just to Mary's walk in the darkness to the tomb on that Sunday morning, but to how Mary, the disciples, all who had put their hope in Jesus, would have been feeling at

that time. In fact, the whole world was in darkness, because it appeared that God had failed in His plan to forgive everyone and bring new life and hope for all. But what Mary, Peter and John discovered that morning changed not just their lives, but the lives of all people: Jesus is alive! He has overcome death and the grave. Into our world and our lives of darkness caused by sadness, hopelessness, conflict, guilt, and death, comes the light of God's love in Jesus bringing joy, hope, love, peace, forgiveness and life. The event they witnessed and then took out to the world is the beginning of the end of a world and life lived in darkness away from God, as we move to both knowing and sharing God's love in our lives every day.

It may have been small, it may have been quiet, it may even have been surprisingly unexpected, but the empty tomb, followed by the risen Jesus appearing to many people, is the event which has changed our world and our lives. Instead of giving us the answer to the question of 'Who Sank the Boat?', it helps us to know with absolute certainty who saved the world. As we each come to know, believe, accept, and live in the life-saving and light-bringing event of Jesus' resurrection for us, we know that in our faith is the beginning of the end of all those things which separate us from God and which hold us back from living a full life in all He now wants to give to us. Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

- Can you think of any events from history or from your life when what proved to be the final straw or tipping point seemed to be so small and quiet compared to other things which led up to what happened?
- Think back on the history of God's love for His people, and the events of Jesus' life. Which events come to mind for you? What role do they all have to play in God saving us all?
- Reflect on the events of Easter Sunday morning, take the time to really think about it if you can. How do you picture Jesus' resurrection? Do you even find it possible to do so? How do you think that Mary, the disciples, and all the others who saw Jesus after He rose would have felt when they first saw Him alive?
- Jesus is alive! This is news which changes our world and our lives. Reflect on what this means for your life, and how your life would be different if you didn't have faith in the new life you have through Jesus.

Pray: thank God for showing His love for us in sending Jesus to die and rise again for us. Ask Him to help us to know, to live out, and to share the joy of the resurrection in our lives each day.

*Pastor Andrew R. Koehler  
20.04.2025*