

CAP EASTER SERMON 2025

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Scripture: Luke 24: 1-12

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24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." ⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marvelling at what had happened."

You know, the Resurrection of Jesus is not just the centrepiece of our faith. It is also the most disruptive and transforming truth in the world. How does it do that?

1. It disrupts the finality of death. Before the resurrection, death was the great equalizer. It always won. Even the greatest prophets, kings, rulers, heroes all died. But with the resurrection of Jesus, He breaks the grip of death. He shows that death is not the end but a defeated enemy.
Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 15:54, "Death is swallowed up in victory." That kind of upends everything we thought we knew about life, suffering, purpose, and identity. It's a disruptor.
2. It rewrites the story of our human history. The cross looked very much like defeat, but the Resurrection reframes it as a victory. How? Evil didn't win. Rome didn't win. Sin didn't win. And the tomb didn't win.
Now history isn't spiralling downward. It's headed towards renewal because of this truth, that history is being rewritten. Revelation 21:5 says, "God's kingdom is breaking in and He's making all things new."
3. It disrupts our lives with a new reality. When Jesus rose, He didn't just invite us to believe in a doctrine; He invited us into a new kind of life. What kind? One in which you past no longer defines you. Your sin no longer owns you. Your fear no longer controls you. And your grave no longer holds you. You are no longer just existing. You've come alive in Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation." 2 Corinthians 5:17
4. It redirects the course of our lives. The Resurrection puts a call and a purpose on our lives.
 - To follow the Risen One.
 - To live for what is eternal.
 - To die to ourselves and live by the Holy Spirit.
 - To proclaim that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar, not culture, not even self.

5. It offers hope that transforms everything. It offers hope to us. Without the Resurrection, life can feel like a slow decline into despair. But with it, suffering is not meaningless. Justice will be done. Love will triumph. Life will win.
“Because I live in you, you also will live.” John 14:19.

So, the Resurrection is a disruptive and transforming piece of truth. It disrupts death, it rewrites our stories, it calls us into new life, it sends us on a mission and it fills us with unshakable hope. It doesn't change one thing; it changes everything. It shifts our assumptions. It rewrites our expectations and it invites us to stop living like death has the final word. Luke 24:5 captures this disruption in one piercing question from the angels to the women at the empty tomb. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” This is not just a historical moment, beloved. It's a spiritual challenge that is thrown. That question echoes through the centuries right down to us, to you and me today.

Why seek ye the living among the dead? What are we looking for in life? Are we, without realizing it, still looking among the dead?

Let's go back to our text. The women came to the tomb with spices, ready to preserve a dead body. They loved Jesus deeply, but they expected death and not life. They were devoted, but their expectations were still rooted in a Good Friday world. It was still Friday for them. And sometimes we too live as if a Sunday hasn't happened. We bring our love, our prayers, our habits and our worship, but our mindset sometimes is still stuck in the grave. We expect darkness. We embrace or we brace for disappointment and we prepare for the loss.

But the angels say He's not here. He is risen. It begs the question: Why would we seek the living among the dead? At first glance, it seems like a strange question. Who would do that? Why would you do that? Who would look for life where death reigns? But spiritually, beloved, we often do the same.

Consider this. We look for identity in what the world says about us and not what God says. We seek joy in fleeting pleasures hoping they'll give us what only Christ can give us. We chase peace in control, success or distraction. We try to revive our faith by revisiting past experiences rather than engaging in the living Christ today. If you're honest, we'd say “Amen” to that one. How often do we go back in the past and live in the past? We turn to dead religion, going through the motions without really engaging the heart.

So the question lingers: Are you still looking for life in places where Jesus no longer dwells? Where do we go? What are our modern graveyards and how do they look? Old habits and sins that we've never released. Guilt and shame, we keep digging them up even though Christ has already forgiven us. Outdated dreams or identities that we cling to instead of embracing God's new direction. Trying to earn God's love through performance, replaying past failures over and over on a loop, returning to toxic relationships or even environments, holding on to bitterness or unforgiveness, or just revelling in past spiritual highs where we keep trying to replicate a moment rather than walk in present obedience. All gravesides that we visit – empty, God is not there. Jesus has risen.

And the corollary to that: Where do we find life among the living? If that's what an empty grave is, if that's where death is, where there's no life, where do we find life? We find life in the risen Christ.

Where do we find the risen Christ?

1. **We meet the risen Christ in His Word.**
His Word is always alive, always speaking.

I remember during COVID time, I felt the Lord telling me to record podcasts of His Word and send it out. I remember remonstrating with Him and saying, "Lord, not just the Word. Let me expand on it and give a little context." And God said to me, "Just the Word. Only My Word." And so I've done that. the podcasts only have God's Word and a prayer. And I've heard from so many people, how the Word has touched and changed hearts, encouraged people, lifted situations. It has met people on a deathbed who have then embraced Jesus in the last hour. God took that, just His Word, because His Word is living and active.

2. **We also encounter Him in prayer.**

That's why Paul would say: "Pray without ceasing", so that every moment you and I can live in the reality of the risen Christ. Pray, don't stop, because we walk in tandem with a living God.

How many of you have commented as we've gone through our Fridays of prayer, how not only has it been so wonderful to pray for brothers and sisters, but that you yourself have been lifted up through praying for others, that you meet Jesus in the context of prayer because He too is interceding with you. We come together in prayer.

3. **We experience Him in the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit guides us. When we need clarity and direction, His voice whispers: This is the way; walk in it. When we are weak, He empowers us. And when we need to change, He transforms us.

4. **We meet Jesus in the living community of believers amongst each other.**

We find life when we walk with others who are also walking with Jesus.

5. **We meet Him in the ongoing mission that He has laid on our hearts.**

Life comes, beloved, when we serve, when we share the gospel, when we love the broken, when we step into God's calling with courage.

Jesus is alive and He's always on the move. To follow Him is for us to move as well. Don't look for Him in what has ended. Look for Him in what He is doing now.

How does the resurrection power work out in my life?

- Ask God to reveal where you're still clinging to dead things, and He will. Where you're expecting life, but find only emptiness. Let go of what was so you can embrace what is. Let go of the past and embrace the present so that it will change the future.
- Don't hold on to the tomb when Jesus is calling you to walk out of it. walk with the risen Jesus every day.
- Choose life in your thoughts, your habits, and your priorities.
- Engage with the living body of Christ, the church. Life multiplies in community.
- Live expectantly. Resurrection means we don't have to settle for surviving. We were made to thrive.

We've looked where we often seek life in dead places. True life is found in Jesus, in the risen Christ, in His Word, in His people, and His mission. But this isn't just about individuals seeking the living among

the dead. It's also a question we must ask the church. Are we looking for life in places where Jesus has already moved on? Are we alive to where He is leading us next?

The Church at Powai is 28 years old today, and to God be the glory for that. 28 years ago, we were in our living room, starting church at 10.30. But God has done such incredible things through us, over the years. In 28 years, we've been able to plant churches. We've been able to touch so many lives. We've done so many things that God has placed in our hearts and in our midst. And we've embraced them. We've enjoyed His presence. We've enjoyed following Him, doing the things that He has asked us to do. And I don't think I'm going to recount all that He has done. I'll just leave it to all of you to know what you've been involved in.

But these are not just memories, beloved. They are celebratory moments, because they are stones of Ebenezer that remind us that we have a faithful God. He's a God who is always faithful. Not only does He call us, He equips us as well to do everything that He calls us to do.

Now the resurrection question, not just for the women at the tomb, nor just for each of us personally, but for our church corporately. Are we seeking the living among the dead? That's the question for you and me today.

As a church, are we seeking the living among the dead? Are we tempted to live in the glow of what was even the glorious God-blessed past? Are we clinging to models, ministries, or memories Jesus may have moved on from? Or are we ready to meet the risen Lord in what He is doing now and where He is going next? We can honour the past without living in it. The tomb is empty. Jesus is not there. He's risen. He's moving and He's calling us to move forward with Him.

So, as we enter our 29th year, the question is not: Can we replicate what we once did? No! The question is: What does resurrection life look like for us now? What must resurrection life look for each one of us corporately as the church at Powai now?

The questions we ask:

- Where is Jesus at work in our city?
- How can we join Him?
- What are new needs, new doors, new people that He's sending us to?
- What are the grave clothes that we need to leave behind?
- What ministries might we resurrect? Or what new ones must we birth?

Let's be those who rise and run with the risen Lord. the angels asked the women: Why do you seek the living among the dead? Maybe today God is asking that, not just of you, but of us as we celebrate the Resurrection.

Let's not stand at the tomb of what once was. Let's stand in the power of the resurrected Christ in what is and what must be done. Let's not look for Jesus where He no longer is. Let's not stay frozen with fear or stuck in nostalgia. Let's move forward into the life, power, and purpose the risen Christ has for us. He's risen. Let's follow Him and join Him there. Let's turn and face the future. Let's look through His eyes of compassion. Let's settle on where He is focused. And let's join Him in that work.

Why seek He, the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Let's follow Him

Amen.