

St. Mary's Sanderstead

Easter Day 2018 - John 20:1-18

In a stroke of genius, the Greeks built an enormous wooden horse with a hollow tummy in which men could hide. After the Greeks convinced their foes that this structure was a peace offering, the Trojans happily accepted it and brought the horse within their fortified city. That night, as the Trojans slept, Greeks hidden inside snuck out the trap door and proceeded to slaughter and decisively defeat the Trojans. The Trojan horse was one of the most successful lies in history....

Here's one more close to home....

The cheque is in the post

Leave your CV and well keep it on file

Open wide it wont hurt

When you hear the ice cream man music it means he's run out of ice cream....

It's often not the lie itself that hurts most, but the fact that we can no longer trust the person whose told it....

A boy was called to the headmaster's office.

"You are in big trouble, he said because you cheated on your test.

"But I didn't cheat," replied the boy.

"Yes you did, the proof is here that you copied John's paper, as your answers are the same as his...

Thinking as fast as he could the boy said, "Well if you really want to know, John cheated off me."

Placing the two test papers in front of the lad, the headmaster pointed to Johns' paper and to question number 4 which asked

"What Sally did at the park"

John has written, "I have no idea" said the headmaster,

"You wrote, "Neither do I"

How do we know that what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John say about what happened on that first Sunday morning to Jesus isn't a lie...that someone didn't just copy a story they'd heard, or worse still invent the whole thing...

I suspect that we have all at some point wondered if the resurrection of Jesus isn't just too good to be true...

When writing his letter to the Christians living in Corinth, St Paul said that if Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead 4 things would be true....

The first is that all his preaching, my preaching and the preaching of countless others is in vain.... that we are wasting our time.

The second is that if Jesus hadn't come back to life there would be no forgiveness of sins.

The third thing would be all those who have died are nowhere, that they are simply gone forever.

And finally if Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead Christians are to be pitied above all people for believing a complete and utter load of rubbish.

The resurrection.... I wonder what you really think?

In the churchyard of St Peter's, Tewin, stands one of the largest trees in the country...It is in the grave of Lady Anne Grimston.

Now Lady Anne didn't believe in life after death, and it's reported that when she lay dying in her luxurious home, she said to a friend, "I shall live again just as surely as a tree will grow from my body."

Well Lady Anne was buried in a marble tomb and the grave was then marked by a large marble slab, surrounded by an iron railing.

Years later, the marble slab was found to be moved a little. Then after some time, a small tree began to grow through the opening.

The tree continued its growth, tilting the marble stone and breaking the marble until today it has surrounded the tomb with its roots and has torn the railing out of the ground with its massive trunk.

To the unbeliever, maybe just a coincidence, However, maybe, God took her up on her challenge.

It was 6 in the morning on Sunday April 5th Ad 33 and the woman had gone down to the tomb carrying spices to anoint the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth.

Their eyes were red from crying and It seems as if they haven't stopped crying since late Friday afternoon when the soldiers had ordered the body of Jesus to be taken down from the cross.

Because it was late, they hadn't the time to completely prepare his body for burial...they've come early because they don't want to be seen, but somehow they know they have to convince the Roman soldiers who are guarding the tomb to move the 2 ton stone block and let them enter.

But when they get there, the soldiers are unconscious, the seal across the tomb is broken, and the stone has been rolled away and when they look inside, it's empty. At first they think someone has taken the body...

I wonder what you think?

Did they get the wrong graveyard... did they imagine it, maybe, in the throws of grief they were just seeing things or maybe they just lied....

Towards the end of the second century, a Roman critic of Christianity named Celsus, declared that the appearances of Jesus after his death, as narrated in the four Gospels, were dreams, they were tall tales or hallucinations - the products of fancy, ambition or wishful thinking.

Today, such doubts are reinforced by the understanding of science that rejects in principle any event appearing to depart from the ordinary patterns of nature.

However one thing cannot be denied....

That shortly after Jesus was executed, his followers who one minute were in terror for their lives cowering in a locked room in the city of Jerusalem, were suddenly galvanized into people whose message about a living Jesus and a coming kingdom, preached at the risk of their lives, changed an empire.

The gospel accounts tell us that numerous witnesses saw Jesus after his death. Some saw Him in a garden, others in a room, others on a road, others by the sea, and others on a mountaintop.

Some saw Him at dawn, others during the day, and yet others, at night. Other than the 11 disciples' who saw him, touched him, ate with him and later saw him ascend into heaven, 500 other people claim they saw the same Jesus who had died on the cross and many of them would die for it....

Since then its been estimated that 4 billion people have come to know Christ believing that he is alive....

But what do you think?

We are here this morning to recall, think about and celebrate an event which changed history...

Jesus of Nazareth was born in an obscure village, the child of a 14-year-old girl who was found to be pregnant before marriage. As a refugee he grew up in another obscure village, where he worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty.

Then for three years he preached in and around the towns of a country smaller than wales.... He never set foot inside a big city. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place he was born. He never wrote a book, or held an office. In fact, he did nothing that usually accompanies greatness.

When Popular opinion turned against him, His friends deserted him. He was turned over to his enemies, and went through the mockery of a false trial.

He dreadfully beaten until unrecognisable and then nailed to a cross between two thieves who mocked him and while he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he owned - his coat.

Jesus had no servants, yet he was called Master. He had no degree, but was called Teacher. He had no medicines, yet the crowds called him a Healer.

Twenty-one centuries have come and gone, and today Jesus of Nazareth is the central figure for more than a quarter of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings and queens that ever reigned put together, have not affected the life of humanity as powerfully and as significantly as this "One Solitary Life."

So what do you think?

Avery, Caitlin, Amelia and Jackson will shortly be baptized, But why?

A get together? A 2000 year old hallucination, a false hope, or a lie?

I don't think so....

Today we are baptizing them to be a part of the greatest story ever told...baptizing them into a family which God himself began, a family that he loved so much that he sent his only Son so that all who believe in him may never truly die.... When asked how much do you love me, Jesus said this much and he stretched out his arms and died.....

If the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is as I believe it to be, the greatest event and story ever told what I wonder will we do about it, how will we allow this remarkable event that we recall and celebrate today shape our choices, our lives and our future.

The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian kings.

Westminster Abbey is renowned, because in it rests the bodies of English kings queens and nobles.

Mohammad's tomb is noted for the stone coffin and the bones it contains. The Taj Majal was built as a memorial to a wife of one of India's Shahs. The tomb of Jesus is famous not because of what is inside, but because it is empty!

The angels who sat where Jesus body once lay said to those peering inside.... Jesus is not here...he is risen just as he said... but what do you think? **Amen**