

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8

Text: Mark 16:8 ‘So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid’.

Theme: *The foolishness of the resurrection*

There are stories that we struggle to believe, but they eventually make sense and we end up believing them. And there are stories that no matter how many times you hear them, you know the empirical evidence just make them look foolish to believe. The resurrection of Jesus is one of those stories, except that the story is true, and people that have tried to deny its veracity have ended up looking foolish in the process.

Paul writes about the foolishness of the cross, as he points out how a seemingly despised means of executing people ended up being the means that God would use to bring about his truth and his plan for the forgiveness of our sins (1 Cor. 1:18-25). But he also points to the need for the resurrection to be true, or Christianity would be a most despised faith (1 Cor. 15).

Now, if Paul were defending the resurrection in a court of law, and he was hoping for solid evidence or strong testimony, then he would have been mostly disappointed. That is because all the gospel writers say the first people to have witnessed the resurrection were women, and the ancient world did not consider the testimony of women to be reliable. The empty tomb has also been presented as an evidence, but I do not find it very convincing. The one evidence that I find more convincing is Jesus’ appearances and especially Thomas declaration after he puts his finger on Jesus’ side (Jn 20:28). But we have always had problems with this one.

The main problem that we have had with Jesus’ appearances has to do with the dominant belief that the resurrected Jesus was his dead body that had been resuscitated in the manner in which Lazarus was brought back to life (Jn 11:44). But it is very clear from the gospel writers’ accounts that the body that Jesus had after the resurrection was not a resuscitated body, but a transmuted body, for it had the capacity to go through locked doors and the capacity to change form and shape. If it was a transmuted body, then what kind of body was it, and can we explain it?

Paul refers to Jesus’ resurrected body as a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44). But how does a spiritual body look like? For a long time, no one knew how to explain the kind of body that Jesus had after his resurrection, and there has always been a temptation to say that it is like a ghost. Recent research into the evolution of matter, however, is providing some interesting insights and it might eventually provide answers to the missing part of our interpretive puzzle. The question that physicists have been asking is very simple: if matter, from which our bodies and everything else, evolved from star dust, then what kind of material will current matter might evolve to?

Interestingly, dyed-in-the-wool atheist, Carl Sagan, might have provided the most promising proposal and at the same time accidentally answers the question of what kind of body did Jesus have after his resurrection. As an atheist, Sagan might have considered Jesus’ resurrection as the silliest story ever told. And it is highly likely that he never expected that his thoughts would one day contribute to answering a two-thousand-year-old puzzle.

Now, I must admit that I like Sagan very much. He is my kind of scientist: flamboyant, supremely confident, and he never gives in to those that did not like him. Sagan wore many scientific hats, but I believe he was famous because he was an excellent, science communicator.

Sagan's proposal was made in the form of a movie called, *Contact*, which was released in 1997, starring Jodie Foster. The movie tells the story of a little girl, Eleanor "Ellie" Arroway, who became an astronomer, and was interested in contact between earth and outer space. She headed a research station, and the success she was making led to the establishment of an international consortium to send someone to where the messages were coming from. A spacecraft was built, but unfortunate for Ellie, the world was a man's world, and a man was chosen for the mission. But in what can be described as poetic justice, a terrorist was able to get through security and blew up the spacecraft as it was taking off, killing the man chosen ahead of Ellie.

As it turned out, a wealthy man had built a replica of the machine that got blown up, and Eleanor was chosen for the mission. The spacecraft ended up dropping to the sea after a pulsating take off. But during time the craft was hovering above the platform, Eleanor was able to reach a place in space that looked very much like earth, but with an unusual atmosphere and a beautiful beach like Bondi beach.

As she began walking on the beach, Ellie saw what appeared to be a mirage, approaching her from the other side. As they got closer to each other, and the mirage began to settle, she realised it was her father, who died while she was a child. They talked, and the father's body was like a body of high energy with the capacity to change shape, very much like the Jesus that appeared to the disciples in a locked room (Jn 20:19). If the body that Jesus had at his resurrection is in the new kind of material, let's call it 'super matter', then Jesus would have been the firstborn of this new creation (2 Cor 5:17).

The scientist in me gets really excited about these new ideas and insights from science. But as a Christian, the most important evidence of Jesus' resurrection is the Universal and Apostolic Church that we read about in the book of Acts. This is because Jesus promised the disciples before he died that he would send the Holy Spirit (Jn 14), and that happened when the church was born (Acts 2).

Further, Jesus told the disciples before he was killed that, 'because I live, you also will live' (Jn 14:19). Yes, my friends: we live because our Lord lives. You and I are the living proofs that Jesus is alive. How well are we doing in showing our families, our friends, our colleagues, our school mates, and the world, that Jesus Christ is alive in you, today?

Keep on trying; never give up loving, caring and forgiving, because they are the things that show the world that Jesus Christ is alive.

Jesus' resurrection may look foolish, but it is the pinnacle of God's truth.

For the glory of God. Amen.