

## **Reflection Easter Sunday April 20<sup>th</sup> 2025**

Have any of you ever had crazy crabs or hermit crabs as a pet?

One thing that hermit crabs need to do as they grow is shed their exoskeleton and find a new shell. It is a very difficult time for crabs. Unfortunately, many of them die. When they shed their skin, they change colour and look a bit different. Sometimes, they bury themselves in the sand so that their skin can harden up a bit. After all of this, the crab needs to find a new shell that is just the right size for them and not too heavy to carry around. But the crabs must go through this difficult process so that they can grow.

As humans, we are lucky that we don't have to worry about changing houses often. But sometimes, there are things that we need to leave behind if we are going to grow in life. When we move to high school from primary school, there are new things we need to learn and do. We can't keep doing things in the same way as we used to. So, in some ways, we are like the crazy crabs. We need to keep learning and growing and sometimes have to leave things behind so that we can move on.

Today, we remember the story of Easter. We remember that the disciples wanted to hold on to Jesus forever. They didn't want Jesus to leave, but they learnt that they couldn't hold on to him in the same way and keep living out his mission in the world. They needed to find a new way of being – or perhaps a new shell to grow into. It wasn't easy for the disciples to move on, but if they hadn't, we wouldn't be here today celebrating Easter together.

In John 20:1-18, we encounter an uppermost important moment in the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection. Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' most devoted followers, goes to the tomb early on the first day of the week only to find it empty. In her grief and confusion, she is confronted by two angels and eventually by the risen Christ himself. This transformative interaction carries deep implications for our Christian walk and our understanding of discipleship.

If I was reading a book for an assignment, I would underline this or bracket this passage because of the emphasis it puts on the letting go of the physical

dependency of Christ as *we embrace our* calling as disciples. Mary's initial reaction to the empty tomb is one of despair. A totally natural response to the empty grave. She is clinging to the past—the memories of Jesus, the lessons learned, the moments shared. Rather than seeing the empty tomb as a sign of hope, she perceives it as a loss. It is this moment that highlights the struggle many of us face in our spiritual journeys: the temptation to hold on to the familiar, the comfortable, to our own space and house so to speak, and the known not wanting to face the challenges that come with change – a bit like the crab.

Jesus' response to Mary is striking. He calls her by name, "Mary," which not only reaffirms their personal relationship but also signals a shift in understanding. In this encounter, Jesus reveals that his presence will no longer be confined to a physical body or a specific time and place. He urges her not to hold on to him, for he has not yet ascended to the Father. This moment of letting go is critical; it symbolises a deeper reality of discipleship—that following Christ requires us to embrace change and uncertainty.

The call to discipleship is not simply about maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus but about spreading his message and embodying his teachings in the world. Jesus instructs Mary to go to his brothers and tell them of his resurrection. This charge marks the beginning of a new mission for Mary—a transition from being a devoted follower to becoming an active participant in the kingdom of God. In this sense, the resurrection empowers us to step out of our comfort zones and share the hope of Christ with others. One of the first things the disciples did after Christ's death was to gather in 'fellowship' over a meal. I'm not sure if you've noticed a common theme which John and I have is to encourage us all to stay after church and enjoy fellowship together. We plan for occasional times through the year when we can gather to enjoy fellow together – grow spiritually together in a safe place where you can feel comfortable inviting your family and friends to join us.

As Christians today, we find ourselves in a similar position. Sometimes, we may feel inclined to keep Jesus at arm's length, wanting to hold onto the experiences and emotions tied to our past encounters with him. However, we must remember that Jesus calls us not to a stagnant and impassive existence but to a life of dynamic faith. Just as Mary was sent forth to witness to others, we too are called to share the gospel actively, impacting our communities with the love of Christ.

Jesus' instruction to Mary also reflects the universal truth that the Christian journey is not just about looking back with nostalgia but moving forward with purpose. It invites us to reevaluate our spiritual lives:

- Are we merely clutching the memory of Jesus, or are we engaging with him in our daily lives?
- Are we allowing his presence to empower us to be active participants in the ministry of reconciliation, love, and justice?

As we reflect on this passage, we must remember that the call to discipleship may require relinquishing our preconceptions, fears, and desires for certainty. In letting go, we create space for the Holy Spirit to guide us into new paths and dynamics of faith. Discipleship invites us to take risks, embrace the unknown, and trust that God is continually at work in and through us.

Our reading from John often causes confusion because the once hospitable Jesus is seen here being unhospitable, but actually it's the opposite, what we witness through John's words is Christ's hospitality of infinity, offering us rich insights into the nature of our relationship with Jesus and our calling as his loving followers. It challenges us to release our grip on a *statis quo* understanding of faith and encourages us to embrace the dynamic and transformative journey of discipleship. Let us, like Mary, respond to Jesus' call, stepping into the world as bearers of his resurrection message, empowered to live out our faith actively and authentically.

We have stepped out well beyond our time of being in the wilderness and moved way beyond the desert of being mere lost wanderers. We are now

standing firmly and confidently in the new garden of life. Where the flowers are fresh, and the sweet perfume of their scent permeates through the air. The fear of being 'seen' in fellowship is erased, the nourishing water is sprinkled, and the new breath of life is openly experienced. Our lives are to be lived by and through our faith in the risen Christ Jesus. To stay alive the crab knows it has need to move on, some do and sadly others don't know the experience of a life renewed and refreshed.

Praise be to God on this beautiful Easter day! Christ our Lord is risen today, Hallelujah!! Our new life starts here, starts today.

Amen