



The resurrection changes everything

by Rev Dr Dan Mueller

The torch from the archaeologist pierced the dark cavern for the first time in over 1,000 years.

The team were astonished to see articles of gold and silver reflecting the light. It was April 3, 1987, and this was their first sight of the crypt beneath the Famen Temple pagoda, in mainland China. But the gold and silver were not the main discovery. Along with these, the team discovered three finger bone relics, one in each of the main chambers. These turned out to be fakes, called *ying gu* ("shadow bones"), designed as decoys to protect the *zhen shen* (the "true body" relic). In a fourth hidden stone chamber, the archaeologists uncovered the holiest object in Buddhism: what is believed to be part of the finger of the historical Buddha Sakyamuni.

The finding was a sensation to Buddhists everywhere, and the bones are now visited by many Buddhists, with Famen Temple drawing up to one million visitors each year. Some have labelled this relic, "The bone that changed China."

Now if someone claimed to find a finger that belonged to Jesus Christ, no Christian would believe them. Because, in contrast, the Christian faith is founded on the belief that there is no finger to find — the body of Jesus Christ cannot be found, because he is alive!

This is what sets the Christian faith apart from all others: Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, Messiah, Chosen One, the founder of Christianity was dead and buried, but his body is now nowhere to be found! Jesus of Nazareth was human, but no mere human. As the Son of God, he has defeated death. So we don't have a finger bone to worship. If we did, then Jesus would just be like every other human: dead, nothing but a decaying bone.

But the truth the followers of Jesus live by is that Jesus is alive. So it's the resurrection of Jesus that changes everything!

(1) The resurrection changes everything, because death is defeated. The men in gleaming white say to the women who discovered the empty tomb that first Easter morning, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5–6). Jesus can't be found among the dead, because his resurrection has defeated death. And Jesus promises the same for his followers. "Today you will be with me in Paradise," he says. Like Jesus, your body will be raised and made new. Death is not the end. The things that once terrified us — like sin, death, and the power of the devil — we can now laugh at them! They are defeated! Death is defeated.

(2) The resurrection changes everything, because Jesus is alive to be in relationship with you. If there's no bone to find, and Jesus is alive, and if Jesus is a person, then he's alive to be in relationship with you. You are invited to be in relationship with a *living* God, not a dead pile of bones. In fact, Jesus promises his followers his very own spirit/breath/word to be inside of them — the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of Luke calls this "power from on high." The Gospel of John calls the Spirit a "helper," "advocate," "friend," and "guide." You are invited to commune with the Spirit of Jesus. Through his Spirit, Jesus promises to be present with you in his Word: the Bible is not an old, dead book, but living and active. Through his Spirit, Jesus promises to be present when we remember his words at the Last Supper: in Holy Communion we share bread and wine that is Jesus' very body and blood, he's truly present with you, for you.

(3) The resurrection changes everything, because you are given a mission to the world. Luke tells us, 'When [the women] came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.' (Luke 24:9). You can't keep good news to yourself. If you get a job promotion, if you become pregnant, if you close a big deal — you are simply bursting to tell others. The mission of a follower of Jesus is to tell others that Jesus of Nazareth is alive. Are you, like these women, bursting to tell others the good news that the tomb is empty?! He must truly be the Christ, the Chosen One, the Son of God. The risen Christ is alive, and he wants to be in relationship with you. The risen Christ is alive, and gives you the mission of sharing his good news with your friends and family.

May you live your life, marvelling and astonished at this good news! Your death is defeated! You are in relationship with a living God! You have a mission! Go in joy and peace.



Messages of hope is a ministry of Lutheran Media.

For support and more resources go to

www.lutheranmedia.org.au
www.messagesofhope.org.au

or contact us via

luthmedia@lca.org.au
+618 8267 7314