

When you're faced with reality of the resurrection, you're only **really** left with 3 options: Worship; Terror; or Denial.... And that's what we saw in this morning's readings – all three of those reactions came out for us to see...

Now, the resurrection, whilst surprising, wasn't **entirely** unexpected. Jesus did say before it all happened, that He was going to die, and then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, rise again.

And the chief priests and the Pharisees, wanted to make sure **that** didn't happen. And they wanted to make sure that it couldn't appear as if it had happened, and so they went to Pilate and said,

“Sir, we remember when that imposter was still alive, He said that after 3 days, he was going to come back to life again... We reckon his disciples are going to try and flog his body and then tell everybody “Hey! He's alive!”... And if that happened, that fraud would be worse than the first...”

And so Pilate said, “Hmm, Righto.. You make it all secure. You put a guard on it, and make it as secure as you can.”

And that's what they did. They put the soldiers on guard, and they put a seal on the stone, to make sure that nobody shifted it...

It's almost laughable really. Fancy putting a seal on the door of Jesus' tomb... You know what a seal is, don't you??? It's a means of checking on security – it's a means of making sure that security hasn't been breached...

*If you open your power box at home, on your electricity meter, you'll see a little piece of wire, or a tiny cable, wrapped around a screw or a peg, that goes through the cover of your electricity meter. And you cannot open the cover of that electricity meter, to get in to it to tamper with it, unless you break that little wire.... And then there is a little piece of lead or aluminium, or other soft alloy, which is clamped down around that wire, with a seal on it.*

*Here's a photo of my electricity meter. On one side, the seal says ERG for Ergon, and on the other side, it has a unique number... Now, that doesn't stop me from getting in – I could do that with a pair of side cutters, really easy. But it lets Ergon know, if security has been breached – if somebody's tampered with my meter...*

And the chief priests and Pharisees, put a seal – probably a wax seal, on a piece of rope fastened around the stone. So, if the stone was moved, either the rope or seal would be cut or broken, and then the chief priests

would know that the soldiers had been derelict in their duty of guarding the tomb.

And I just laugh at this. There was no point looking at the seal to see if anyone had tampered with the stone. There was this big old angel sitting on the rock that he'd tossed aside... It was pretty obvious that the tomb had been tampered with alright... The whole point is, not that it had been tampered with – but **who** had done the tampering... a little puny seal is not going to stop God.

And when the earth quake shook, and the angel rolled the stone away, and sat on it, the guards were struck with terror, ... Verse 4 says <sup>4</sup> **And for fear of him (the angel) the guards trembled and became like dead men.** I suppose in their terror, they must've fainted...

But the women were there too. And the Angel said to them, “Don't be afraid”. “Look. He's risen. He's gone” .....

Jesus didn't need the stone to be gone for Him to rise from the dead (or for Him to get out of the tomb for that matter). But the women needed the stone to be gone, so that they could see and know that Jesus was risen...

**Verse 8** So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** And Look!, Jesus met them and said, **"Greetings!"** And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

When the guards encountered the reality of the resurrection, they were struck helpless with fear... But when the women encountered the resurrected Christ, they took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

The same reaction that happened when Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples in Galilee. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him... - Not perfectly – We're know some still doubted.. But those who realised that Jesus had been raised from the dead, worshipped Him.

But... there were one other group of people in this story, and I feel that their reaction is the saddest of all... And that's the reaction of the chief priests... What **was** their reaction?

Here's a hint:

*(Play Finding Nemo Denial Clip)*

Denial !!!

Some of the guards went and told the chief priests everything that had happened:

*“Ahhh..., Boss,... your seal broke.”*

*“Oh, and there’s something else too... Um, there’s a great big old Angel sittin’ on top of the stone.... And well, the dead guy’s gone....”*

*“No. Nobody took him... He was gone.*

*When the earthquake happened and the white shiny guy rolled the stone away, there was nothing there...*

- *Empty .*
- *Vacant.*
- *Unoccupied.*
- *Deserted.*
- *Bare.*
- *There was no one there.*
- *There’s as much rotting flesh in that tomb as there are feathers on a frog....”*

It was empty....

What is a chief priest to do????

You’ve just crucified this bloke who claims to be the Son of God.

And He’s been raised back to life again. An angel from God, breaks **your** seal, and testifies that Jesus is risen....

What is a chief priest to do????

When faced with the resurrection, what did they do????

Denial!!!!!!

They paid the guards to lie, and pretend that the body had been stolen by the disciples...

Denial!!!....

Why would they do that? What kept them from worship? What kept them in this state of denial????

They had reliable eye witnesses, telling them what had happened... Proof of the resurrection... Proof that Jesus is exactly who He said He was....

Wouldn't you think that they'd fall down on their face before God, beg for His forgiveness, and worship Him for His Son??? You'd think that wouldn't you????

But no..... Denial!!!

What kept them in denial????

Well, I reckon it was probably their pride. Maybe it was their tradition. Maybe it was their theology??? But pride is very often that ugly part of us, that prevents us from embracing the activity of God...

Let's jump forward now, to Easter 2014.

God reveals Himself.

The risen, crucified one, reveals Himself...

How do we react? Some react in fear... they're afraid to receive Christ and to worship God as their saviour.

Many take up an attitude of denial... The fact that Jesus is raised from the dead – well that doesn't have to affect me...

Denial!!!

But the chosen greet their risen Lord in worship.

Let's worship the risen Lord Jesus Christ.