



## St Barnabas Cray

# From Fear to Joy: Embracing Easter's Power

## Weekly Devotional Journey

### Monday - When Holy Encounters Overwhelm

#### Morning Devotion

##### Today's Verse

They came and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.' (Matthew 28:9-10 NIV)

##### Devotional Thought

The women who first encountered the risen Christ experienced something profoundly human yet deeply spiritual—they were 'afraid, yet filled with joy.' This wasn't a contradiction but an honest response to meeting the holy. When we truly encounter God, we become acutely aware of our own smallness and failings, yet simultaneously filled with wonder at His greatness. Think of Moses at the burning bush, Isaiah in the temple, or Mary at the annunciation—meeting God brings both awe and fear. The women's fear was reasonable; they had watched their beloved teacher arrested, humiliated, and executed. After living through the worst days of their lives, could they dare believe this news was real? Sometimes we too are so bruised by past disappointments that we daren't

hope for a better future. Yet Jesus met them exactly where they were—uncertain, overwhelmed, but seeking. He didn't chastise their fear; instead, He offered His presence and the gentle command, 'Do not be afraid.' This is how divine encounters work: they simultaneously humble us and lift us up, challenge our understanding whilst offering comfort. The holy is not tame or predictable, but it is always loving. When we open ourselves to truly meeting Jesus—whether in prayer, Scripture, or worship—we shouldn't be surprised if we feel overwhelmed. This is not a sign of weak faith but of authentic encounter with the living God.

### Reflection Question

When have you felt both overwhelmed and blessed by God's presence in your life? What fears might be holding you back from seeking deeper encounters with Jesus?

### From Sunday's Sermon

"When we truly see holiness, we become sharply aware of our own smallness and our own failings."

### Today's Application

This week, create space for genuine encounter with God, expecting it might feel overwhelming. Set aside 15 minutes each morning for unhurried prayer—not just requests, but sitting quietly in God's presence. When you feel small or inadequate in prayer, remember this is normal when meeting the holy. Don't rush to fill the silence or manage your emotions. If past disappointments make you hesitant to hope, bring those wounds honestly to Jesus. In your relationships, practice the gentleness Jesus showed the women—when others share fears or doubts, respond with 'do not be afraid' through your presence and patience rather than quick fixes. At work, when facing overwhelming situations, remember that feeling small doesn't mean God is absent; it often means He's preparing to do something significant. Allow yourself to worship even when you don't understand everything, following the women's example of clasping Jesus' feet in reverent awe.

### Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, like those first witnesses to your resurrection, I come to you with my own mixture of hope and fear. Help me not to be ashamed of feeling overwhelmed in your presence—teach me that this is often where real faith begins. Meet me in my uncertainties and past disappointments. Give me courage to seek you even when I don't have all the answers. May I worship you not because I understand everything, but because you are worthy of my trust and adoration. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Resting in His 'Do Not Be Afraid'

#### Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, reflect on how Jesus' words 'do not be afraid' have echoed through your hours. Perhaps you've noticed moments when fear crept in—fear of failure, rejection, or disappointment. The women at the tomb teach us that fear and joy can coexist in the Christian life. We don't need to wait until we're fearless to experience God's joy. Tonight, consider how Jesus met you in your ordinary moments today. He doesn't require us to have perfect faith or complete understanding before He offers His presence. Like those women, we can bring our uncertainties, our past hurts, and our overwhelming circumstances directly to Him. The resurrection means that no situation is too hopeless, no heart too broken, no fear too great for Jesus to handle. Rest tonight knowing that the same Jesus who gently told frightened women not to be afraid is speaking those words over your life right now.

#### Evening Reflection

How did you sense Jesus' presence in your day today, even in small or ordinary moments?

#### Evening Prayer

Risen Lord, thank you for meeting me today in ways both obvious and subtle. As I rest tonight, help me release the fears and anxieties I've carried. Speak your peace over my concerns for tomorrow. I am grateful that you don't require perfect faith from me—only an open heart. Amen.

## Tuesday - When Good News Seems Too Good to Be True

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (Luke 24:11 NIV)

#### Devotional Thought

The women at the tomb faced a challenge we know well—sharing news so extraordinary that others dismissed it as nonsense. Even the disciples, who had walked with Jesus for years, couldn't initially accept the resurrection. Sometimes we can be so bruised by past disappointments that we aren't hope again for a better future. The women may have been terrified of just another letdown, that this news was too good to be true. They had endured the worst days of their lives watching Jesus die; could they really trust this reversal? This speaks to our human condition. We build careful walls around our hearts after experiencing betrayal, loss, or repeated disappointments. We learn to expect less, hope for less, believe in less. But the resurrection challenges our protective cynicism. It declares that some news really is as good as it sounds—that God's love is not too good to be true. The women's struggle with credibility reminds us that revolutionary truth often sounds impossible at first. Who would believe that death had been defeated, that forgiveness was complete, that new life was available? Yet the very audacity of the claim points to its authenticity. No one invents a story this outrageous unless it actually happened. The resurrection doesn't promise that all our earthly disappointments will be erased, but it does promise that God's ultimate purposes cannot be thwarted.

#### Reflection Question

What disappointments have made you cautious about hoping for good things? How might the resurrection invite you to risk hoping again?

#### From Sunday's Sermon

"Sometimes we can be so bruised by past disappointments that we aren't hope again for a better future."

## Today's Application

Identify one area where past disappointment has made you cynical or closed-hearted. This might be in relationships, career, health, or even faith itself. Today, practice small acts of hope: send that encouraging text you've been hesitating to write, apply for that opportunity despite past rejections, or pray for that situation you've given up on. When you catch yourself dismissing good possibilities with 'that's too good to be true,' pause and ask whether resurrection thinking might apply. In conversations, listen for others sharing hopes or dreams, and resist the urge to protect them with pessimism—instead, offer gentle encouragement. If someone shares good news that seems unlikely, remember how the disciples initially reacted to the women's testimony. Practice believing the best rather than expecting the worst. Write down one specific hope you've been afraid to voice, and bring it honestly to God in prayer. The resurrection means that some things really are as wonderfully good as they sound.

### Morning Prayer

Father, I confess that disappointment has sometimes made me cynical about your goodness. Help me distinguish between wise caution and faithless pessimism. Teach me to hope again, not naively, but in the light of Easter's victory. Where I've protected my heart by expecting less, show me how to risk believing in your abundant love. Give me courage to share good news, even when others might dismiss it. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Trusting in Impossible Possibilities

#### Evening Reflection

Tonight, consider how your heart has responded to hope throughout this day. Did you notice moments when you automatically assumed the worst, or times when you dared to believe something good might happen? The resurrection stands as God's great 'yes' to impossible possibilities. It reminds us that our God specialises in doing what seems too good to be true. The women's initial disbelief wasn't a failure of faith—it was a human response to overwhelming grace. As you reflect on today, notice where God might be inviting you to expand your expectations of His goodness. Perhaps He's preparing to do something in your life that currently seems impossible. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to bring new life to your dearest

situations, your most hopeless relationships, your deepest disappointments. Rest tonight in the truth that with God, the best news often sounds too good to be true—until it becomes beautifully, wonderfully real.

### **Evening Reflection**

Where might God be preparing to do something in your life that currently seems impossible?

### **Evening Prayer**

Lord of resurrection, expand my heart to believe in your impossible possibilities. Help me rest tonight knowing that you specialise in making the too-good-to-be-true become beautifully real. Thank you that your love for me truly is as good as it sounds. Amen.

## **Wednesday - The Courage to Speak Unlikely Truth**

### **Morning Devotion**

#### **Today's Verse**

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28:8 NIV)

#### **Devotional Thought**

Despite their fear and the likelihood of disbelief, the women ran to tell the disciples what they had

witnessed. They knew how their testimony would sound—Luke tells us the men dismissed it as ridiculous nonsense. Yet they spoke anyway. This reveals something profound about truth-telling in the Christian life. When we encounter Jesus, we're compelled to share that reality, even when we know others might think us foolish. The women faced a triple challenge: they barely believed it themselves, they knew their credibility would be questioned, and they had no idea what the consequences would be. Who was going to believe them? In their culture, women's testimony wasn't even legally valid. Yet Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses to the resurrection—a radical act that shows God's heart for the marginalised and overlooked. Their courage to speak despite potential ridicule teaches us about faithful witness. We don't share our faith because we have all the answers or because we're guaranteed a positive reception. We share because truth demands to be told, because love compels us to speak, because others need to hear what God has done. The women's example shows us that authentic witness often feels risky and vulnerable. We might worry about sounding naive or being dismissed as irrelevant. But the resurrection gives us something worth the risk of ridicule—news that can transform lives and offer hope to the hopeless.

**Reflection Question**

When has fear of how others might respond prevented you from sharing something important about your faith or God's work in your life?

**From Sunday's Sermon**

"Who was going to believe them? Luke tells us in his Gospel that when they relayed the news to the disciples, the men dismissed it as ridiculous, as nonsense."

**Today's Application**

Today, look for one opportunity to share authentically about God's work in your life, even if it feels risky. This doesn't mean cornering someone with a sermon, but rather speaking honestly when natural opportunities arise. When a colleague asks how you're coping with stress, mention the role prayer plays. When a friend shares struggles, gently offer to pray for them. If someone asks about your weekend, include church activities without apology. Practice speaking about faith as naturally

as you discuss other important parts of your life. Notice your internal dialogue when opportunities arise—do you hear the women's fears about credibility and consequences? Remember that your role is faithful witness, not successful persuasion. Write a brief note of encouragement to someone, mentioning how you've seen God at work in their life. If you've been hesitant to share a testimony or answer about faith, consider whether fear of ridicule is silencing important truth. The women's courage reminds us that some news is too important to keep quiet, regardless of the reception.

### **Morning Prayer**

Lord Jesus, give me the courage of those first witnesses who ran to share unlikely truth. Help me speak naturally and authentically about your work in my life, without being pushy or apologetic. When I face ridicule or dismissal, remind me that you chose unlikely messengers for your most important news. Use my ordinary words to plant seeds of hope in others' hearts. Amen.

## **Evening Devotion**

### **Faithful Witness in Small Moments**

#### **Evening Reflection**

As you reflect on today, consider the small moments when you had opportunities to bear witness to God's reality in your life. Perhaps you spoke up, or perhaps you remained silent. Both responses teach us something. The women at the tomb remind us that faithful witness doesn't require eloquence or perfect theology—it simply requires honesty about what we've experienced. Their message was straightforward: 'He is alive.' Sometimes our most powerful testimony is equally simple: 'God helped me,' 'Prayer made a difference,' or 'I felt peace in the midst of chaos.' Tonight, don't berate yourself if you missed opportunities to speak. Instead, ask God to make you more aware of natural moments for authentic sharing. Remember that witness isn't just about words—it's also about how we live, love, and respond to difficulties. The women's courage grew from their encounter with the risen Christ. The more real Jesus becomes to us, the more natural it feels to mention Him in conversation. Rest tonight knowing that God can use even our imperfect attempts at witness.

#### **Evening Reflection**

How did your life bear witness to God's reality today, both in words and actions?

**Evening Prayer**

Faithful God, thank you for the privilege of being your witness in this world. Forgive me when fear silences my voice or when pride makes my words unhelpful. Make me more aware of natural opportunities to share your love. Help my life speak as clearly as my words. Amen.

**Thursday - When Everything Changes****Morning Devotion****Today's Verse**

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?' (John 11:25-26 NIV)

**Devotional Thought**

The women at the tomb faced a chasm of unknownness. If Jesus was truly risen, the consequences were enormous. What would the authorities say? What were His followers supposed to do? This was uncharted territory. The resurrection doesn't just add something nice to our existing life—it fundamentally changes everything about how we see life, death, and life after death. It tells us that life is not pointless, that we are not simply on the road to nowhere, that Jesus was telling the truth about forgiveness, new life, and the love of God. This can feel overwhelming because it demands we reconsider everything we thought we knew about reality. When we truly grasp the resurrection, it affects our relationships, our work, our money, our priorities, our fears, and our hopes. It means that all the wrongs others have done, all the wrongs we have done, can be made

right through Jesus' perfect sacrifice. It means death is not the end—not for Jesus, not for us who trust Him. It means this world, for all its darkness and unfairness, does not have the final word. But living in light of resurrection reality requires courage because it sets us apart from cultural norms and expectations. It means we can be 'amazingly all in' on the things that ultimately matter most, rather than investing our deepest passions in temporary things. The resurrection gives us freedom—not constraint, but an open field to live freely and spiritually, liberated to serve and love without the fear of ultimate loss.

### Reflection Question

If you truly believed the resurrection changes everything, what would you do differently in your daily life?

### From Sunday's Sermon

"The resurrection of Jesus is better news than anything we've seen in our lifetime, anything in this country or any other time in all of history. It makes all the rest seem like footnotes, small details."

### Today's Application

Conduct a 'resurrection audit' of your priorities and investments. Look at your calendar, bank statements, and mental energy over the past month. Where are you 'amazingly all in' on temporary things whilst being 'standoffish' about eternal matters? Choose one area to realign with resurrection reality. This might mean having that difficult conversation you've been avoiding because relationships matter eternally. It could mean being more generous because you trust God's provision. Perhaps it means spending less time on social media and more time in prayer or serving others. If you've been paralysed by fear of death, job loss, or relationship breakdown, let resurrection hope give you courage to take faithful risks. Consider one relationship that needs forgiveness—the resurrection means wrongs can truly be made right. If you've been living as though this world has the final word, identify one way to invest in God's eternal kingdom this week. Remember, this isn't about earning salvation but about living freely in the light of what Christ has already accomplished.

### Morning Prayer

Risen Saviour, help me live as though your resurrection really changes everything—because it does. Realign my priorities with eternal realities. Give me courage to invest deeply in what matters most to you. Free me from the fear of ultimate loss so I can love and serve boldly. Show me how to live in your resurrection freedom today. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Living in Resurrection Freedom

#### Evening Reflection

Tonight, reflect on how resurrection reality has shaped your choices and attitudes today. The women left the tomb not with a complete roadmap for the future, but with the life-changing knowledge that Jesus was alive. That was enough to change everything. You don't need to have your entire life figured out to live in resurrection freedom—you simply need to know that Jesus has overcome death and offers you new life. This freedom isn't licence to do whatever you want, but liberation to become who God created you to be. It's freedom from the fear that death has the final word, freedom from the burden of earning God's love, freedom from the despair that this broken world is all there is. As you prepare for rest, consider how this freedom might shape tomorrow's choices. Where might God be calling you to live more boldly, love more freely, or serve more generously? The resurrection doesn't promise that all will go smoothly, but it does promise that you have the Lord of life on your side, showing you the way forward in whatever situations you face.

#### Evening Reflection

How has knowing about Jesus' resurrection given you freedom to live differently?

#### Evening Prayer

Lord of life, thank you that your resurrection gives me freedom to live without ultimate fear. Help me rest tonight in the confidence that you have overcome everything that could truly harm me. Prepare my heart to live more boldly in your freedom tomorrow. Amen.

## Friday - Opening Ourselves to Resurrection Life

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

(John 10:10 NIV)

#### Devotional Thought

As we conclude this week's journey, we return to the central invitation of Easter: to open ourselves to Jesus and His resurrection power in our lives. The women's transformation from despair to joy didn't happen because they figured everything out intellectually—it happened because they encountered the living Jesus. 'Suddenly, Jesus met them,' Matthew tells us. He met them where they were, in their uncertainty and overwhelm, and that encounter changed everything. Jesus wants to bring us truly alive, to free us to live as He intends. This isn't about perfection or having all our problems solved—it's about having someone who is the Lord of life on our side, showing us the way forward in whatever tricky situations we face. The resurrection life isn't a feeling we must manufacture but a reality we can receive. It comes through opening ourselves to Jesus in prayer, in Scripture, in the community of His people, in those holy moments where we know He is real and wants to meet us where we are. What holds us back from getting it, from knowing resurrection life in our own experience? Perhaps we think it's too good to be true, or we fear what others might think, or we're hesitant about how life might change. But Jesus promises that following Him leads not to constraint but to freedom—freedom to serve, to love, and to live fully in the space He provides for us. The women left the tomb without all the answers, but they knew something so powerful—they had met Jesus, and that was enough to change everything.

#### Reflection Question

What do you sense Jesus is inviting you to open up to Him—fears, hopes, areas of your life you've kept closed off?

**From Sunday's Sermon**

"Jesus is the one who overcame all that was wrong, all that was dying in our world that makes our lives smaller or more selfish. He wants to bring us truly alive, to free us, to live as he wants us to."

**Today's Application**

This week, commit to one specific practice that opens you more fully to Jesus' resurrection life. This might be starting each day with a few minutes of unhurried prayer, reading a Gospel account of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, or joining a small group where you can grow in community with other believers. Identify one area of your life you've kept partially closed to Jesus—perhaps your finances, your ambitions, a difficult relationship, or a secret struggle. Take a concrete step to invite His lordship into that area. If fear of others' opinions has held you back, choose one way to live more openly as a follower of Jesus this week. This could be as simple as saying grace before a meal in public or as significant as having an honest conversation about faith with a family member. Remember that resurrection life isn't about perfection but about progressive transformation. Like the women at the tomb, you don't need all the answers—you simply need to be willing to encounter Jesus and let that meeting change how you live. End this week by writing a prayer of commitment, telling Jesus specifically how you want to open your life more fully to His resurrection power.

**Morning Prayer**

Lord Jesus, like those first witnesses, I want to encounter you in ways that change everything. I open my heart to your resurrection life—not just as a doctrine to believe but as a reality to experience. Show me how to live freely in your love, boldly in your truth, and generously in your service. Meet me where I am, and transform me into who you want me to become. I trust that you are the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Afraid Yet Filled with Joy

#### Evening Reflection

As this week draws to a close, you may find yourself in a place similar to those first witnesses—afraid yet filled with joy. This isn't contradiction but maturity. We can simultaneously feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of God's love and filled with wonder at His goodness. We can be uncertain about the future whilst being confident in God's faithfulness. We can acknowledge our smallness whilst celebrating our significance to Him. The women's mixed emotions teach us that authentic faith doesn't require us to have everything sorted out emotionally or intellectually. What matters is that we've encountered the risen Jesus and allowed that meeting to begin its transforming work in our lives. Tonight, as you reflect on this week's journey, notice how God has met you in your own mixture of faith and fear, certainty and questions. Like those first witnesses, you may not have all the answers, but you know something powerful—Jesus is alive, He loves you, and He wants to fill your life with His resurrection reality. That's enough to change everything, starting right now.

#### Evening Reflection

How would you describe your own mixture of fear and joy as you consider what it means to live in resurrection reality?

#### Evening Prayer

Risen Lord, thank you for meeting me this week in my own blend of faith and fear. Help me rest tonight knowing that you don't require perfect understanding, only an open heart. As I go forward, may I carry both the holy fear that comes from knowing you and the deep joy that flows from your love. He is risen indeed. Amen.