

Reading - Mark 16 v1-3

In recent months, our Growing Young Team have been thinking about BHAGS.

What on earth is a BHAG, you may well ask!

A BHAG is simply the acronym for Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG). A phrase coined by entrepreneur Jim Collins to enable business to survive and thrive. Many churches have a BHAG.

One of the most notable and iconic BHAGs is President Kennedy's 1961 famous declaration: "This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth." The result, of course, was a historic moon landing in 1969.

Simply put, a well-thought-out BHAG shifts the focus to the bigger picture. It excites and energises people, if executed successfully, it can prove to be the cornerstone for tremendous achievement.

Today, Easter Sunday, we are part of God's BHAG.

God's Big Hairy Audacious Goal is to reconcile this world back to Himself.

We believe in a Trinitarian God. A God who exists in three persons but One God.

Was there a conversation, sometime in the distant past, when the Father said to his Son and the Spirit, *we need a BHAG for the world! We need to have a Big Hairy Audacious Goal that will bring all humans into relationship with us.*

Here are the Facts.

1. We have created the best possible world and we entrusted human to look after it!
2. We gave them free will and charged them with stewardship of this world.
3. From the beginning they messed up. Our enemy Satan confused them and the world became polluted with evil.
4. So, we need a BHAG to reverse this situation.

So, the Father, looks to the Son and to the Spirit and says *this is the plan:*

You, my Son, will go to this world and become a human being. You will be born into poverty, to a young woman out of wedlock. You will experience their

suffering, pain and rejection. You will be tempted as they are and you will wrestle with Satan on planet earth.

You will live with them for 33 years. On your 30th year, you will go preaching that the Kingdom of God is near, and you tell them to turn to me in repentance. Some will listen, most will turn away. You will bring together 12 disciples, who have many weaknesses, one will betray you, one will deny you, and the rest will let you down when you need them most.

You will go to a cross and die the cruellest of deaths between two criminals.

They will think it is all over.

Then 3 days later, you will rise from death and through you all mankind will be offered the choice of eternity. Your death and resurrection will be the pivotal point of human history.

This is my plan, my will, my Big Hairy Audacious Goal.

Are you willing to go and Spirit will you take over when my Son ascends back to heaven? Your role Son and Spirit, is to make this BHAG – Big Hairy Audacious Goal a reality in the lives of millions upon millions of people and the Goal is that my perfect Kingdom will one day be fully established on earth and all sinful actions of greed, jealousy and hatred will be driven out of this world and a new Kingdom of love, joy and peace will be established where all mankind will live in harmony, with no pain or death, ever to touch them again.

This in my BHAG. May it be accomplished.

Today we are gathered here, to celebrate God's BHAG.

The symbol of the BHAG, is the stone that was rolled away from Jesus' tomb.

The moment that the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. They wouldn't have slept much since Friday! They would have relived the crucifixion and there would be many tears and deep grief.

They were unaware of God's BHAG.

All they could see was the death of a good man.

But wild horses would not stop them being at Jesus' tomb. They had important business to anoint his body with spices and their first opportunity according to Jewish law was after the Sabbath.

Pilate gave orders to make the tomb as secure as possible, and he has a guard watching over it! There was no way this stone was going to be moved, and there was no way that anyone would interfere with the body in the tomb!

Pilate puts his seal upon the stone. This was Empire business!

On route to the tomb, the women suddenly thought, how on earth are we going to move the stone from the tomb, who is going to move it? The stone would be like a large mill stone – 2 tons in weight!

It would take considerable strength and energy to move it. It was certainly beyond three grieving ladies.

Mark has included in his narrative, this little detail...*Who is going to move the stone?*

In that one thought, is our human response to death and suffering. Who is going to change things? There is no way possible! It is beyond us!

Like those three-grieving women, we all face our own challenges in life. Some of us get it harder than others, but at some point, we will meet with a problem, which will be like the stone in front of the tomb. How are we going to move it?

It is large, it is heavy, it is unmovable! We cannot see a way.

Humanly speaking there was no way! The stone blocks the way!

When we look around the world and we see the situation in Ukraine, we may well ask, how is this going to change? How can the stone be rolled away?

When we consider the situation that our churches are finding themselves in, reduction in ministries, reduction in buildings, how can this be changed?

The answer is simply this. Humanly speaking, it can't be! There is no human way that these things can change.

Hymn 426 - All heaven declares

Reading – Mark 16 v4-8

1989 was the year that the Berlin wall came down and 10 East European nations were released from Communist rule. Historians will cite many reasons for this change. However, one factor is often overlooked and that is a prayer meeting in Leipzig.

For 40 years the church in East Germany had been seeking to be good citizens while praying for better things. They had cared for the poor and met to pray and worship. Since 1982 Pastor Christian Führer had been gathering a few dozen people in his church to pray. Seven years later four churches were holding weekly prayer meetings and the numbers began to grow attracting ordinary citizens. After the meeting candlelit marches throughout the city took place. The media in the West picked it up and the communist authorities debated how they could stamp it out. The secret police phoned in death threats and roughed up some of the marchers. But the crowds kept coming, over 50,000.

On 9th October 1989 police and army units moved into Leipzig. People feared a massacre and hospital emergency rooms were cleared. Honecker, the East German leader, gave permission to use force, but the prayer meeting and the march went ahead. 70,000 people marched, the following Monday 120,000 and a week later 500,000 were on the streets. By November one million people marched in East Berlin. They were peace and prayer marches.

Then the unheard-of happened. People started crossing to West Berlin and the police stood by without a shot being fired. The Berlin Wall and all it symbolised had crumbled.

In our Gospel story today, v4, “But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.”

When they looked up!

Was he alluding to the fact that when we look up our problems begin to change? When we look up to God, look up and beyond ourselves...beyond our fears and tears...we see that there is a way, a way beyond human control. God's way! God's Big Hairy Audacious Goal of saving this world!

The psalmist once wrote, “When I consider the works of your hands...the moon and the stars that you have set in place...in other words, when I look

up..... and then he sees the elevated position that God has given to humans, we are crowned with glory and honour..."

When we look up, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us...His children, His beloved...His people. We see ourselves as part of God's great plan!

The Gospel story invites us all to look up, and see who you are in God's sight. Look up, for He has overcome sin and death for you and me through the cross.

When we look up to God, our situation can and will change, for suddenly we invite the Eternal God into our story and to walk with us.

He can make a way where there is no way, for he enters into our situation.

That's what Easter is about! Looking up and trusting in God.

He can roll away the largest obstacles; he can change the most difficult of situations.

This is the Easter Message. God enters into the most difficult challenge that we face in life – death! He transforms death into life. This is God's BHAG!

This is the Easter story. God becomes man and enters our time and space to enable us to cope with life and to face the challenges and to go forward trusting him.

The stone being rolled away, is the most spectacular story that we will ever hear. It is the greatest moment in human history. It is far bigger than man walking on the moon or the splitting of the atom, pretty spectacular things, as they are, but the stone being rolled away surpasses them all, because it is God's way, it marks the beginning of eternal life.

Christ has been raised to eternal life, so will we!

Isn't that good news this Easter Sunday!

The stone has been rolled away, once and for all and all that we have to do is enter the story...enter the tomb. Go deeper and discover for yourself that the stone has been rolled away.

Willie Barkley writes, "The Christian life is not the life of a person who knows about Jesus, but the life of a person who knows Jesus. There is all the difference in the world between knowing about a person and knowing a person...He writes, the greatest theologian in the world who knows

everything about Jesus is less than the humblest Christian who knows Jesus personally.

That's what Easter is about, do we know him, as a living presence in our lives?

When the women enter the tomb and encounter an angel who tells them that Jesus has risen they leave the tomb bewildered and fearful, but they leave the tomb with the instruction to go and tell the disciples and Peter.

God's plan was now to be communicated and God's vision for humanity had begun.

We are also commissioned to go and tell people about God's Big Hairy Audacious Goal for the human race. He has come to us to save us through his Son Jesus Christ and through the continued work of the Holy Spirit.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Amen.