Star Wars – did you see the original film? In the Star Wars universe it is not now the first film – goodness knows where it will end up as new films are added in the beginning and middle. It is a story about an evil empire and good rebels; the former all powerful, the latter struggling to survive threatened by a massive weapon. They fight against great odds and win through. The film is now dubbed A New Hope, a title we could have for Easter.

In the Easter story we have an all-encompassing religion with its powerful leaders pitched against a small preacher who defies them and their rules, who is destroyed, his mission thwarted, his disciples fleeing, bewildered and crushed. But against all the odds a new hope arises, as the defeated preacher returns to life.

Which makes our reading strange, because it asks more questions than it answers.

1. Has the preacher returned to life or not? (Where is the body?) (v4)
2. What do the two men mean by ‘raised’? (It usually indicated getting up after sleep) (v6)
3. Why did the apostles think the women’s story was nonsense? (v11)
4. Why was Peter amazed at finding Jesus’ body gone? (v12)

Not in this reading, nor in Mark, do we see Jesus. In Matthew Jesus meets *two* Marys on the way back from the tomb, in John *one* Mary meets the gardener/Jesus at the tomb.

Here though it is as if Luke is teasing us, developing intrigue and mystery, before telling stories that show that Jesus was risen and of how he met his disciples.

Through the stories and the dawning realisation that Jesus isn’t dead any more the disciples come to grasp that Jesus’ journey is not over, but has a new start. They also grasp a new journey for themselves.

In all this we are meant to see a new journey for ourselves, no longer fearing death but embracing new life, no longer overcome by hatred and bitterness, but empowered by love and forgiveness.

The resurrection is not just what happens to Jesus, it is what can happen to us: a New Hope/Journey.