

Easter Sunday 2017

Even when we've been through the worst of nights – where we can't sleep for fear, or illness, dread, anxiety, trouble or grief – even on those nights – in the morning the sun rises and in our bleakness – consciously or otherwise we will hear the sound of birds singing outside. After a hard, bleak, awful night that song can sometimes penetrate our hearts – and give us a sense of hope, a sense of comfort.

I wonder was it so, as Mary made her way to the garden? She was up early, while it was still dark, burdened by grief, depleted by sorrow. But when she arrives at the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, she makes an even worse discovery – that the body has disappeared – or been taken.

All the disciples are at rock bottom. The man whom they love most in the world has been brutally killed and executed and their very reason for living has been trampled to the ground.

In the story there is panic and disbelief, there are tears, there is the beginning of faith, there is the beginning of understanding, there is an encounter with angels – there is a profound meeting with the risen Lord – and a commission to go and share the good news – that Jesus has been seen and is alive.

Hope is reborn.

But this is not some Hollywood feelgood movie – where everything works out in the end – this is the beginning of a grand new beginning – for all of humanity – a new beginning where death loses its power over us. Death is conquered by Jesus rising from the dead – and offering eternal life to all. New life – risen life – without the fear or finality of death.

New life – that springs up inside us – wells up from the inside – the life of the Holy Spirit – that plugs us deeply into the knowledge that we are children of God, loved by God and called to sing this song of liberty, called to follow and serve, called to work for justice and peace, called to live in the light of Jesus – as a liberated people. New life – not trapped by death and decay, envy and jealousy, status and power, greed and manipulation – but a free, new life – lived in the light of the resurrection of our Lord and the liberation that that brings.

Life is filled with a new dynamic. Because though we are flesh and blood, though we will die – *we walk and live and breathe in the light of the resurrection*. We know that death never has the final word. We know that Jesus has given us the gift of eternal life – and today and this most celebratory day, when we mark his glorious resurrection – our minds and hearts reverberate with “He has risen!”

Luke and Michelle are to be baptised today – on Easter Sunday – making a public commitment to Christ – one is a young boy – the other a grown woman – but both make the same promises – to turn to Christ and to submit to him as Lord and Saviour. This is a brave decision – a decision that takes courage – but it’s also a joyful decision. It’s a decision that says “yes!!” to all that God has for them in Jesus – a “yes” to Christ’s peace and love, strength and grace in their lives.

As they make their baptism promises – maybe you can whisper them too – and this Easter renew your commitment to the risen Lord Jesus Christ – and the extraordinary new life that he brings.

Let your heart and soul reawaken to that good news – Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive!

There are signs of life everywhere – in the blossom, in the sky – let each sign be a reminder to us of the new life that Jesus brings – He is risen, alleluia!!

Amen.

Notes from Revd Sheridan James’s sermon for Easter Sunday, 2017.