

Easter Sunday 2020
Acts 10:34-43/John 20:1-18

Well the great day has arrived, the day that we have looked forward to since the beginning of Lent, our great day of celebration, when we remember that Jesus not only died on the cross to save us from our sins, but that He overcame all sin, won the victory over Satan and then He defeated death itself and rose again to life! And that we are all invited to share in His victory and live His risen life with Him. Our churches should be full of flowers and we should joyfully be singing His praises together. I am not going to say BUT – we don't have a faith of buts, but is not a Kingdom Word. Although our churches are not full of flowers this morning, many of us are blessed to have gardens full of flowers, or to be able to walk somewhere close and enjoy the abundance of Spring. Our churches may be closed but nothing can stop us singing His praises this morning. I do hope that you were able to go outside and sing at 10 o'clock. Our circumstances may be difficult, we may have loved ones that we are worried about, you may be grieving and if you are my heart goes out to you, God's heart goes out to you, He mourns with you. I am not undermining how awful things are for many people. At the same time this is a time to rejoice – He is still risen and because He is risen we have hope. Even in the midst of our troubles and sorrows, we have hope!

One thing is certain, none of us will ever forget this Easter. But when we look back on it, I am praying that we will not look back from a place where things have gone back to exactly where we were before we were hit with the coronavirus. As the Archbishop said this week, much as our buildings are a great resource and are often great treasures, they are not the Church. We are learning how to be Church in all sorts of different ways, really dispersed throughout our Communities and learning new ways both to gather together

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and to be a blessing and to serve where we are. Some of us are having to learn

to do that without ever leaving our homes, others are serving their communities as they are able, some are working at work and others working at home and some are on the very front line, daily putting themselves at risk in order to help those who are sick. We are learning that our unity does not depend on our being together physically. We are greatly blessed that we have technology that enables us to see and hear each other and to have conversations across the street and across the world.

This is an opportunity for change, an opportunity to see things differently, do things differently, be differently. One of my colleagues said that this has been the “lentiest lent” ever. We have certainly had much more time to pray, reflect, read and hopefully explore our faith and deepen our relationship with God. I pray that we will all continue to do this not only for the duration of our separation but that in this time we will have formed new habits, new rhythms of life that will continue to feed and inspire us into the future.

In our reading from Acts we heard a perfect sermon, a great exposition of the death and resurrection of Jesus and all that He achieved by it. As evangelistic talks go, it would be hard to top, especially coming from an eye witness. The incredible thing is that Peter was in the house of a Roman Centurion! The message is clear, the power of the cross, God’s saving Grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus is for everyone – even those we might have once considered enemies. God so loved the world, not some of the world not just a few people, the whole world – every single person, that He sent His only Son, that all who believe in Him might have eternal life. Allelujah! This should challenge us deeply. It was perhaps one of the first bible verses that

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some of us learnt when we came to know Jesus, but it is not just about us, God loves everyone. This is not something we are supposed to keep to ourselves!

God revealed to Peter that the Gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews. He didn't fully understand what God was getting at at first, but he was obedient anyway to what God asked him to do. As he bravely stepped out in faith, God revealed His purpose. God will continue to give us new revelations if we continue to actively explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We need to continually be asking the questions, what is God doing in my life at this time, what is He revealing to me? What is God doing in my workplace, in my neighbourhood, in my community? How can I be a part of it? Do you believe that God is only working sometimes, in some places or is He at work all of the time in every place? What does the bible say? How do we go deeper, how do we receive those revelations?

Mary didn't recognise Jesus at first in the Garden, Jesus has been through death and now inhabits His resurrection body. But as soon as she heard His voice she knew immediately that it was Him. We have to be listening for His voice, asking Him to speak to us. How often when you read your Bible do you pray for Him to speak to you, to reveal new things to you. We need to hear His voice, whether through the Word or directly to our hearts. We need to experience again and again that jolt of recognition that must have been so like what Mary must have felt.

These are difficult times for sure. For the disciples, the days after Jesus death must have been the worst of times. They lost their Master, their friend, the one in whom they had placed all their hopes and dreams. The one whose presence had inhabited their daily lives for three years. But added to grief

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and disappointment, added to the knowledge that He wasn't after all who He had claimed to be, who they had believed Him to be, added to this was the fear that as His known associates, the authorities might be coming for them next. These are difficult times, but they will end, and just as the disciples mourning and fear was turned to joy and hope, so these times will end and there will be a time of great rejoicing. For the disciples, life was never the same again. My hope and my prayer is that ours won't be either!