

Sunday 9th April 2023 Easter Day

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

(Part of Psalm 118 used at the Passover)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!
Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.
I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
The Lord is God, and he has given us light.
O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

[Music Karl Jenkins – The armed Man Call to Worship](#)

Readings Matthew 28:1-10

Acts 10:34-43 (Living Bible)

Reflection

In a reflection for Easter Day Janet Lees invites us into the world of stones. Starting with the stone which sealed the tomb and reflecting on its impressive size, we are invited to consider the qualities we associate with such a stone – certainty, confidence and presence perhaps. Little stones would be in awe of such a stone, feeling fragmented they dreamt of one day becoming as big. Then the stone is moved and the little stones have no idea how this could have happened and wonder what it might mean. Suddenly there seems less certainty because if the big stone could be moved then anything is possible. Maybe the big stone might break and become small fragments just like them.

The story of easter breaks the bonds of certainty and opens up the endless possibilities of God. We might think the church has taught us the truth of this important story but there is probably more to learn as we journey deeper into the relationship with God. Many call this pilgrimage.

In our reading from Matthew the risen Christ send the disciples back to their home town. We each see home differently but where would you imagine Christ would send you? Home is often the place we work, play, live and love, the place we feel secure and loved. This is the place we are called to work to transform our human situation and relationships, and we do it through the choices we make which should be inspired by our relationship with God.

The journey through lent is for many a pilgrimage, which can involve facing some tough questions about yourself, but we are never alone. Holy week reminds us that not every journey is sunlight and promise, or at least not on the face of it, but in the depths we often discover the greatest miracles, like a big stone being moved against all expectations.

There are so many questions surrounding the resurrection. What is resurrection? A couple of weeks ago I referred to regeneration but that still puts the resurrection into the context of our earthly experience albeit a science fiction experience. Maybe we should be exploring the idea of resurrection in the context of a

cosmic experience, however that is still linked to this earthly experience, or to put it another way it is within the realms of human imagination. Perhaps the resurrection is beyond our human imagination. I have long believed that we are called to grow a godly imagination, to be open to possibilities beyond our imagination and recognise the glory of God in miracles and wonders.

We know there are four gospels and that each gives a slightly different take on some if not all of the events of Holy week and Easter. If we think this is the end of things then we are failing to grasp the challenge of growing a godly imagination.

In a wonderfully imaginative version of the events after the crucifixion, storyteller Trevor Dennis, invites us to walk with those taking Jesus to the prepared grave. They carry also the bodies of the two thieves as Jesus has taught them that all deserve dignity and acceptance, and they cannot leave the two who died beside him to the ravages of nature. Having set the scene by explaining that people had forgotten that the Garden of Eden lay just outside the city gates, long overgrown and forgotten, in their grief we find the burial party losing their way and entering the garden. They had no idea what they were going to do with the two extra bodies they carried and now they found themselves in the middle of a wilderness they did not recognise – LOST. As darkness gathered they found themselves beneath two gnarled trees and realised they would have to leave the shrouded bodies there for the night and return in the morning. Deep in their sadness they left, and did not come back the next day as the whole world seemed to have stilled and the sun failed to rise. Two days later they rose early before the dawn and made their way to where they had left the bodies, at least they hoped they were going the right way, and every instinct told them they were but they did not recognise the place when they got there. As the sun had risen they found themselves in an amazing garden, full of colour and birdsong and their hearts filled with a joy they had not expected to feel again. This must have been what the garden of Eden felt like. When they reached the two trees there were no bodies. There was no place for death in this garden, and as they stood and wondered, realisation dawned – this was the garden of Eden, and as they stood in wonder they heard laughter. It was a laughter they recognised, the laughter they had shared in Galilee and the laughter a mother knew so well. It seemed to harmonize with the birdsong and with the laughter of two young men who had been born to slavery and were now free. Tears of joy flowed down the faces of the friends and their feet found the steps to dance in that beautiful place.

Is this story any more fanciful than the gospel accounts? Probably not but it does invite us to wonder in a different direction and breaks open the bonds of certainty which I believe is what the resurrection is all about.

Pilgrimage is not a linear journey, it is more of a spiral and often we have to retrace our steps having discovered a choice has led us astray. It can be easy to give up travelling but that is to abandon our pilgrimage. Our pilgrimage exists alongside the rest of life, and it should change how we respond on our path through life, how we respond to other people and situations. Instead of being in awe of the big stones we are to dance where we are and celebrate the power of possibility. We are called to be angels along the way, bringing morsels of comfort and hope, however small, to those we pass along the way. The resurrection happened amidst absolute desperation, all hope had been lost at the foot of the cross. It could not have been expected, it was beyond the bounds of human imagination, and it involved angels. It is like seeing a flower lose all its petals and thinking it is dead, only to find a seed head growing and bringing the promise of new life.

However what we celebrate at Easter is not the rhythm of nature, new life springing up after winter sleep, no, we are celebrating upheaval and unpredictability. Easter is a revolution. It introduces uncertainty to the equation of life and suddenly we cannot be sure what will happen next. In following the way of Jesus we are invited to step onto the path of wonder and change, letting go of our certainty and celebrating the possibility rather than the probability of every new day. This is resurrection.

The Power of God

When all seems lost and no hope is left....

When the future is bleak and the tunnel endless....

When you want to give up and bury yourself....

The power of God breaks in and reality is changed!

A stone rolled away, an open tomb,
light in the darkness, hope in the gloom.

Why are we surprised when God breaks in?
Why do we doubt when new things begin?
Remember,
remember the story,
remember the love,
remember you are one connected to God
through the power of his love.

Loving God,
on this Easter Day,
as we celebrate your power and your love,
give us the courage to take our celebration beyond this day.
May we learn to live in the truth of the resurrection, as your people,
a people with a future, your future,
one with all creation, your creation.
By the power of your love
may we see the dawning of a new day and a new way
when all that holds the world captive is rolled away
and a new adventure begins.
Amen.