

## **Sunday 31st March 2024 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.

Come, let us celebrate together, celebrate Easter and celebrate oneness.

Reading                      Mark 16:1-8

### Reflection

On Thursday at the Agape we looked at how Holy Week is all about those who did not understand. Today as we celebrate we celebrate those who did understand and who move the story of humanity forward.

Last week we looked at Jesus' call to become like children and be full of wonder, exploring possibilities and making connections and glimpsing moments of understanding.

Blind Bartimaeus understood, he recognised something in Jesus and believed.

Zaccheus, a wealthy tax collector, not always practising justice in his dealings, understood when Jesus sat with him. We get the feeling he had chosen not to understand but talking with Jesus changed his ways.

The centurion at the cross understood. He witnessed the worst that humanity can do and yet within it he saw the truth of oneness and the place of Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea understood and could not let the body of Jesus be cast aside. He provided the tomb and ensured the body was placed in it before sundown. How different might the story have been without his understanding.

The women who followed Jesus understood, and there were many of them, not all named, who stood at the cross in solidarity whilst the men fled in fear. Three Mary's, Martha and maybe one called Joanna.

Women feature prominently in the Easter story, those who stood at the cross and wept and those who wanted to do all they could for their friend after his death. We know something of Mary of Magdalene story and sense she was rescued by Jesus, that her background was among the outcasts on the edge of society and yet she has a part to play. Jesus' mother, Mary, because of the birth narrative we sense she too could have been outcast had not Joseph stood by her. We have no idea how many women were disciples as scripture only names the men, but there were women too, and from very varied backgrounds. Perhaps some were wealthy, women of place within society, and perhaps some of them were ill and were brought to Jesus for healing and their lives were turned upside down by the encounter. We know something of what they found on Easter morning but can we begin to imagine what it felt like? Imagine having such an experience and rushing to tell the others, the men shut away in hiding, and then to find you were not believed, worse you were treated as 'women' again. Imagine the frustration. Of all the men perhaps Peter understood and went to see for himself and perhaps he persuaded the others to leave that closed room because they must have left to end up having a picnic on the beach with the resurrected Jesus. A picnic which was to change lives way beyond that small circle of acquaintances, for in the power of the experience of Easter those disciples, men and women from very different backgrounds, became the voices of hope and vision and each played a part in the story of church.

Easter is a mystery. Easter reminds us that there is more. At its simplest it is a gateway to understanding, it is an invitation to explore because it is a mystery.

Poem – There is more

If we view Easter like a corm stored for use later,  
it is like an Easter Egg in a box,  
something to be consumed and forgotten.

Easter is so much more.

To celebrate easter  
means actively engaging with its potential each and every day,  
nurturing the mystery  
and looking for new shoots and encouraging roots.

To be Easter people  
is to be open to change and open to growth.

It is to be explorers and connectors,  
looking at the mystery of Easter from all possible angles  
and seeing where it connects.

It is to be encouragers of change and designers of the kingdom,  
ready to see the best in people and forgive the rest.

Easter reminds us that there is more,  
it is a gateway to new understanding.

Creator God, may we celebrate fully and live faithfully through and because of the mystery of Easter. As resurrection people, believing in life beyond this life may we embrace the resurrection of yesterday, today and tomorrow, always open to change and new beginnings. Believing the Christ is alive may we be alert and awake to meeting the Christ everywhere and anywhere, surprised and yet reassured that in the mystery of Easter we will find new understanding.

Heather Whyte 2024

