

Wednesday 16th April 2020

Readings: Psalm 118; 1-2, 14-24, John chapter 20;1-18

Reflection

The Psalm for today parallels well with the Resurrection account. We may say that there have been days which seem to have changed the world, bringing fear and hatred into our midst. But Easter day changed the world. It declares to our world that no bad news, no man-made darkness, can extinguish the light of the gospel. Nevertheless this global pandemic is something we would never have predicted at the beginning of this year.

The gospel passage tells a story, Verses 1 - 2 a story of the dawn's uncertain light, of Mary Magdalen - of the empty tomb, the haste to take the news, the rush to test it, the dawn of faith, the weeping of Mary She is not in a group of women as in the other Gospels, and she goes earlier, in the darkness before the dawn and presumably to mourn rather than embalm, which has already been done at the burial.

At the crucifixion she was one of the women beneath the cross (John 19:25).

Mary is clearly important in the tradition of the cross and resurrection. Here she finds that the stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, and presumably suspects grave robbers (common in those days) In alarm Mary runs to Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple, John, to tell him that the body is missing. Verse 3 - 7 They immediately hasten to see what has happened. John outruns Peter. John is metaphorically as well as literally, the one who gets there first, the one with the deepest understanding and most immediate insight. Verse 8-9 John enters, sees and believes. There is no angelic presence, no appearance of a risen Jesus, no recall of Scripture. John the disciple has but the empty tomb and the grave clothes. These and these alone convince him. There is no asking for signs of evidence for visible and tangible reassurance. He believes.

Verse 10 - 12

The disciples go home, But Mary has somehow returned to the tomb and stands there in tears. She looks into the tomb and sees two angels, who had not been there for the Beloved disciple, They reveal an awesome glory, but she needs a body, even if dead. She was mourning, not only the death of a loved one, but also the disappearance of the body, the mortal remains in the preparation of which for burial she might have found some consolation, Jesus had joined the "disappeared " Mary was in the position of mourners, that can happen today, who have not been able to bury their loved ones,- perhaps they died in a disaster or at sea. - and Mary stands there in tears.

Verse 13 - 15

"Woman, why are you weeping?" "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She then turns and sees Jesus but, as is common in the Easter stories, does not recognise him. until he speaks to her, as to his own sheep, by name. (Reference John 10:2-3) "the shepherd of the sheep" "The watchman opens the gate for him"

Verse 20: 17

:And Mary knows it is Jesus. She makes as if to clutch him, and is told not to - but "to go and tell". He is the ascending Lord, and Mary of Magdala is made the first emissary of this truth to his disciples; to tell them that they too are to share his relationship with the Father.

But why does Jesus say I am ascending when all was complete by his lifting up on the cross. Did not his ascension take place then? John has no description of it, as Luke has at the end of his Gospel. (Reference Luke 24:50-53)

For John it is an event unseen by mortal eyes, except for those who could discern the real meaning of the cross.

Easter brought Mary comfort beyond her dreams. She found not a corpse but a living Lord, alive with a new life which was no longer bound by the parameters of mortality.

Verse 18

She was not to hold him, but to go and tell. She did not linger, but no need to run now. She went to tell the others. Such joy - joy which has been shared by countless believers down through the centuries. If as Christians believe, God himself entered the world in the person of Jesus: the resurrection is quite logical, for death could not be stronger than God. God's entering the world was something unique, so too would be a resurrection.

Something tremendous must have happened to change the frightened disciples into missionaries ready to face death for the truth of their statements. The resurrection made such an impact upon the disciples that it became the central theme of their teaching (Reference 1 Corinthians 15:14)

The resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate is about something new. "How so?" one may ask. It's over two thousand years old. Yet because it is an event unlike any other event, it is always new. It doesn't have a fixed date.

Reflection

We need news and at the same time we need current news of God. We live in a world in which faith is often at odds with experience; in which evil seems to be winning the war with good far more often than faith demands that it ought, and where the voice of God may seem often silent.

God is in the lives of individuals, all the good that we can see around us. God is there in all the detail, wherever we seek and find. Every day has a morning, a dawning, a beginning - and Christ is there very early in the morning, of every day - every day of our life, of all those baptised and all those who search for the truth and seek to believe - God is there.

Here in the eye of faith are the proofs of Christ's resurrection, In our stories of encounters with Christ, there are our contributions to the gospel of the resurrection. God's love is stronger than death. It is not a tidy, logical story with a beginning, a development, and an end, like the gospel endings.

It's full of contradictions, of the unexpected. The Christian life is about being alert for Him, keeping awake.

When we proclaim the gospel, then let us do it, show it, and only use words if we have to.

Prayers

Almighty God, who called your Church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself; help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be reconciled to you; through him who died for us and rose again and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

We pray for

those gravely ill with Coronavirus in hospital, being tended by doctors and nursing, and unable to have their family around them. loving them and comforting them.

For the NHS and all nurses and doctors as well as carers in nursing and residential homes, who are caring for the sick, the frightened and the weary

We pray for leaders and governing bodies across the world in their endeavours to bring the pandemic to an end and restore normality and life in every nation around the world.

We give thanks for our church community at Sunnyside and Bourne End at home, but gathered together in God's presence, spiritually in prayer and fellowship, for services through the dedication of our vicar Rebecca, all the staff, leaders, musicians. and housegroups.

We pray for all those grieving for loved ones at this time that they may remain assured of God's love and peace surrounding them, as well as our love and compassion for them.

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work. Yours are the only feet with which he can do his work. Yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

Theresa of Avila in the 16th century

Let us praise God joyfully for all that He has done and continues to do this glorious God-given Eastertide

Yours in the love of God,

Janet Ridgway