

Virtual Church Easter Day
4th April 2021

Alleluia! The Lord is Risen! **Alleluia! He is risen indeed!**

Sing, read or listen to: See, what a morning, gloriously bright. StF 309
<https://youtu.be/6xM-fpXayUg>

Prayer of confession and absolution

People of God, what did you carry to the cross on the hill?

**We brought anger and bitterness,
hurt pride and wounding tongues,
arrogance, mockery and greed.**

We carried them to the cross of Christ, to be nailed there.

People of God, what did you carry down to the grave?

**We brought frustration and loss, anxiety, fear and despair.
We carried them to the tomb of Christ, to be buried there.**

People of God, what are the burdens you carry to the garden tomb?

**We bring our guilt and shame for the wounds that we caused.
We carry the emptiness of our faded hopes,
and the hurt of our failure.**

(pause)

People of God, what do you bring to the empty tomb,
this resurrection morning?

**We bring the groanings of our world,
and the hunger of its people,
the vain hopes for peace,
and the frustration of violence and hate.**

**We carry them, with heavy hearts.
But who will roll away the stone?**

(pause)

As the dew falls, fresh every morning,
and the flowers turn towards the new-born sun:
So God rolls away the burdens of our heavy hearts,
and sets us free to live with Christ.

Jesus says: 'Peace be with you!'

In the name of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven!

Amen! Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

(Jarvis and Pickering 2005)

Sing, read or listen to: Were you there when they crucified my Lord? StF 285

<https://youtu.be/MI9V8owRTA4>

Read John 20: 1-18

The first thing I noticed about this reading is there is a lot of running! Mary comes running to Simon Peter and John. They, in turn, run back to the tomb in a desperate race. Why all this rushing? Why so little consideration for their dignity or sadness? Are they in a hurry to have their worst fears realised? Are they hoping, against hope, that there is some sort of mistake and that when they get back to the tomb all will be sealed and finished as it was before? What were they expecting? What were they hoping for?

When did you last run somewhere? It has been many years since I last ran anywhere. What was the purpose of running – was it fitness related or due to excitement or fear?

When were you last in a hurry to tell somebody your news? Was it when you passed an exam or test? Was it about a new relationship or a new job?

When were you last in a hurry to tell someone about your Christian Journey and where it has taken you?

I was thinking about this very thing this week. We have had some workmen in doing work on our bathroom (all socially distanced!). One of these visitors was a very chatty chap who noticed that we had a lot of Bibles and Christian books in our bookshelves. He wanted to talk about his own life journey with Buddhism and this made me more likely to talk about faith than I would have been in another situation. Would I have been keen to start a conversation if he had not?

This leads me to the second part of our Bible reading for today. Mary's encounter with the risen Jesus. Initially she doesn't recognise him. She is not expecting to see him, and her tears veil her eyes. Are we sometimes like that? So weighed down with anxiety and worries, sadness, and grief that we don't recognise when Jesus is speaking to us?

Do we sometimes concentrate on the tomb instead of looking into the face of the risen Christ? Do we expect God to miraculously transform all situations by his presence?

Then we come to those strange words “Do not hold on to me” Jesus says as Mary finally cries out in recognition. Why does Jesus not want Mary to cling to him when faith seems to demand that we cling to Jesus when in turmoil or distress? There are plenty of other situations after the resurrection when Jesus allows and even invites touch to confirm that he is real, why not now?

When Mary feels that she has realised her deepest need – to hold Jesus once again, to be reassured by his presence, she is given a different commission. “Go instead and tell...”

Are we sometimes guilty of wanting to keep the good news to ourselves? Do we unthinkingly want to keep everything the way that makes us feel good instead of focussing on telling others? I know that I do not run to tell people that I have seen Jesus.

In order to say that we have seen the Lord, as Mary did, we need to meet with the risen Jesus, to know him not just know *about* him. We need to have had that moment of realisation “Oh, I see!” This personal recognition of Jesus is the beginning of love and worship, but it must never be the beginning of ownership. We do not ‘*have*’ Jesus, we do not own God. Our relationship to God is immediately translated into a relationship with all other people. Our knowledge, our recognition becomes the spur to tell others about our experience and our Lord.

Instead of talking about the weather; the latest news; the latest diet; the latest health problem; I need to learn how to simply share my faith journey. My latest encounter with God; the reason that knowing Jesus makes a difference in my life. It is not easy. I am sure that Mary did not want to let go of Jesus having found him again. But if we don’t let go and go tell, how will anyone ever know the stupendous news? Jesus is alive! Alleluia!

He lives! <https://youtu.be/qF6aBDS3drA>

Prayers for others:

When people weep
because they are oppressed,
because they are destitute,
because they are being destroyed by warfare,
because all hope for the future lies dead.

Come, Risen Lord: **wipe away all tears.**

When people weep
because they are anxious and afraid,
because they are ill,
because they are racked with pain,
because someone they love has died.

Come, Risen Lord: **wipe away all tears.**

When people weep
because they are lonely,
because no one listens to them,
because people have been cruel,
because they long for death.

Come, Risen Lord: **wipe away all tears.**

When people weep
at sin they have committed,
at the emptiness of their lives,
at their failures in loving,
at the thought of death.

Come, Risen Lord: **wipe away all tears.**

Risen Lord, come to us, even when we cannot recognise you through our tears,
and call to us, that our lives may be transformed by Easter joy. **Amen**

(Odell 1998)

Ode to Joy <https://youtu.be/eMY3ivdNzwE>