



Easter Sunday

12 April 2020

Hear the Gospel

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **Jesus** said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the **gardener**, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her "Mary."

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord".

John 20:1, 13b, 14,15b,16 ,17 18a

I love the way that Mary thought her resurrected Lord a gardener. It wasn't just the broad-brimmed hat and muddy robe that fooled her: he was *that* changed.

Christ as a Gardener Andrew Hudgins

Who are we looking for? What are we looking for? The crucified One leaps free of all destructive human powers; religiosity, force, coercion, killing, corruption, arrogance, greed, and cruelty and looks us in the face with the eyes of compassion, grace and peace unconfined by our meagre expectations of life, life hide bound by the grave clothes of

death and the distorted human expectations that are crushed by all that is negative in humankind as we know it. Now the life of God rises, free and passionate, confronting the hardest questions with startlingly unexpected answers, the answers that all that negates and destroys is overturned, even death itself, by the life of God, eternal life in our midst. Yes, Christ has died but Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

So, may we know You and hear You calling us by name into Your living presence now.

When we are tempted to hold You entombed in our blinkered lives, and ever new hope confined by our lack of faith; when we are trapped in the archaic museum of human understanding:

forgive us, we pray, and invite us anew to live life in the fullness of unending hope and ever new possibilities of renewal.

If we affirm in others the temptation to live on in unbelief and human arrogance instead of embracing the opportunities of risen life lived in You:

forgive us, we pray, and invite us to live life in Your abundance.

If we put limits on Your resurrection life, denying the gifts of the miracles of God's new creation in the Easter event:

forgive us, we pray, and invite us to live life in Your abundance with the Risen Lord.

For Christ is risen! There is no tomb which can restrain the life of God. It comes alive in every moment in grace and freedom reaching out to touch us and every corner of Creation in love.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn 369 Hail the day that sees him rise, *hallelujah!*
To his throne above the skies *hallelujah!*
Christ, a while to mortals given,
enters now the highest heaven.
Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah!
Heaven now its Lord receives,
yet he loves the earth he leaves,
though returning to his throne
still calls humankind his own.
Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah!
Still for us he intercedes,
his prevailing death he pleads;
near himself prepares our place,
he the first fruits of our race.
Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah!

Reflection

Often we are prone to define our own risen Christ; one who is the answer to our own particular problems and challenges and one who confirms our beliefs and dogmas; one who would simply make our troubles go away; where the hard questions are answered or where others around us simply do what we want. We are tempted to bypass the harsh reality of Jesus' suffering and death as a necessary part of the path to his risen life. But the Cross is at the heart of the journey to the empty tomb and, paradoxically, the good news that is the Gospel is not good news without the tougher questions and confronting challenges of a uniquely good man's agonising death as the way through to risen life for him and all Creation.

As in this particular Easter our world is engulfed in the, for us, nightmare of an uncontrolled bearer of death and destruction running amok in a world where we had progressed to a belief in our mastery of our human existence, beyond the need of God in the equation in any way, we are surely finding a frightening new reality check about our assumed superiority over the faith understanding of those who passed down to us the remembrance of the destruction and death and resurrection of a man whom God chose to become so to transform all Creation.

Humanity has not yet become its ultimate purposed being and the path to that realisation is not in the rejection of faith and the affirmation of human capacity and achievement. It is in the new life possibilities of resurrection based living and its valuing and honouring of all life. The arrogance of humankind and its purposes for creation without God in the picture because God is superfluous has surely brought us to our knees when a virus can shut down the world. Resurrection must now mean a new way of living and understanding, the way of faith

We who are the community of faith must now assert ourselves and lead the way once again.

We must be the people of resurrection.

Prayers

O God, when we do not recognise you in life's experiences and in those we meet and live out life with, show to us your risen reality, especially in the unexpected places and life's byways, those places covered over by our arrogant assumptions and limited human perceptions of human destiny. When we gather round Your table to take the bread of Your life into our hands grant us the mystery of Your Risen life and the energy of the flow of faith in the lifeblood of sacramental wine. We

pray with those who cannot imagine that You were raised from the destructive forces of the Cross to enable the love of God to be realised, with ultimate finality, for all Creation. Break into life within us even when there seems to be nothing left but death and destruction. For, on this Easter Day, we again affirm its ongoing revelation that Your life and love is never lost, Risen Lord, and You are forever with us as we again walk Your way in concert with You, the way of Cross and Resurrection.

Hymn 602

O Love that wilt not let me go
I rest my weary soul in thee:
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.

O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee:
my heart restores its borrowed ray,
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that sleekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee:
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee:
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be

Commissioning

Go as those who have seen Christ afresh.

Go into the world to live in the power and freedom of resurrection life.

And may the presence of Christ be real in each day;

may the Holy Spirit surprise us with joy;

and may God the Creator hold all life within the garden of hope and its fulfilment world without end.

Amen

Rev Graeme Kerr