

Easter Morning

May I speak with the love and grace of the living God. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

On Maundy Thursday Jesus prepared to die and was betrayed. On Good Friday Jesus died and was laid in a tomb. On Holy Saturday he lay dead in the tomb. His disciples and his mother grieved him. Overcome with pain at the finality and hopelessness of death they faced despair. What now? Could I have done anything to stop all this from happening? How are we going to go on without him? What is the meaning of all this? How can we make sense of Jesus' death?

And then on Sunday morning the women who loved and cared for Jesus during his life, come to the grave, ready to perform a last service of love and care for Jesus, by properly washing and preparing his body for burial, something they didn't have time for on Friday before the beginning of the Sabbath. But something is off, something is possibly really wrong. The stone that should be sealing the grave, protecting the dead body of Jesus, is rolled away. And when they go in to look for Jesus' body, the body is gone. Yet before they have time to think about what might have happened two men in dazzling white clothes appear before them and say:

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.

Can you imagine their surprise? Could it really be true? Could he really be alive? Might the cross really not have been the end? Might not all be lost, might there really be hope?

Yes, God has overcome even death, Jesus is alive! He is risen indeed! And that means all that he stands for, all that he preached about God's Kingdom must be true too. There is hope.

I live in hope. That's something I say quite often. Hope can seem like quite a silly thing, because it's not based on evidence. Hope is looking at death and seeing the resurrection. That's the kind of people we are as Christians. We look at death and see the resurrection. And that is a mighty powerful thing. Hope can give us the strength to hold on, to keep going and to overcome. Hope is a very powerful thing.

Often people think Christians are, or ought to be better people. People who are nicer and kinder than others. People who do not have big egos, but are humble. Christians are supposed to not hurt others, but help everyone in any kind of need. But the truth is, we are just as human as everyone else. We strive to be kind, humble, truthful and maybe even help others where we can. But we certainly do not always succeed. Christians are sometimes unkind, we hurt the people around

us, we mess up. Christians are just as imperfect and broken as any other human being. We are not automatically better people for being Christians, but we are people who have hope and hope can make a world of difference.

We have hope, because Jesus Christ is risen, because he overcame even death. Therefore, Christians are the kind of people, who look at death and see the resurrection. We live in hope. That's at the core of what it means to be a Christian. We can look at death and somehow see the resurrection. We can live in hope, because we believe in a God, who at the beginning of time created something out of nothing and brought life out of even death at Easter.

As we travelled through Holy Week this year, I have talked and reflected several times about these words Jesus said just days before he was killed:

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Jesus is that grain, that fell into the earth and died and so bears much fruit. While the grain is in the earth, dying and dead, above ground we can see nothing but dirt. But then new life shoots up from that dead grain and as it grows it bears many more grains of wheat.

And so it is with us, our lives and this world. Sometimes all we can see is dirt. Our own failures, the pain and brokenness we live with, the

mess we or others have made. The injustices in this world, the senseless suffering and death caused by greed, violence and hatred. The despair of illness, famine or natural disasters. The brokenness of our relationships from layers and layers of hurts inflicted.

Can there be hope, when we look on the desolate dirt of our lives and this world? The resurrection of Jesus tells us, yes, yes we can have hope. Because our God is at work in the darkness, deep down in that dirt, God is creating new life from death. God raised Jesus from the dead and therefore we have hope, therefore we live in hope, despite of what we see.

Hope that God can create new and beautiful things from the broken pieces of our lives. That the God who overcame death can also overcome our failures, that God can bring forth new life from the places of despair and hopelessness in this world. Where there seems to be nothing left but death and destruction, God can still create something new and beautiful. There is hope. God is mysteriously at work, even when all we can see is dirt, God is bringing forth new life from death. And so we live in hope. Because we look at death and see the resurrection.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed, alleluia.
Amen.