

Easter Ramblings.

Acts 10 v 34-43. 1 Corinthians 15 v 1-11 John 20 v 1-18.

Happy Easter Christ is risen He is risen indeed

The past week as we all know was Holy Week. The principle week set for the Church to remember, the week that made us who we are. Many of you may have been through a Maundy Thursday service and sat with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Once again, we may have asked ourselves if we would have struggled to keep awake, whilst Christ agonised at his own impending death. On Good Friday we have been at the foot of the cross and heard again a collection of short sentences which he said in his pain. We remember the words, "I thirst" and it was quenched with a sponge soaked in vinegar. Then even when he was in extreme agony, he still remembers with compassion and care those who are in need. One the thief who he gives the promise of paradise, and then his mother, and loved friend, offering mutual care in the future for both of them. However, the greatest cry surely must be that of abandonment when he calls out, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" That must reach any heart as one of despair, then "It is finished".

Yet we know it is not finishing, but a new chapter in life is about to begin. One can imagine the women going to the tomb carrying their precious pots of oil and perfume that they were going to use to go through the ritual of anointing their dear dear friend. The gloom must have been palpable, both with the light as it was early in the morning, and in their hearts. It always reminds me of Ruth as she leaves Boaz after she lay at his feet and left in the morning before one person could recognise another. Matthew says the day was dawning when the women went to the tomb. Anyone who has ever mourned will know how those women felt that morning, probably they had not properly slept and their eyes red with tears. This was the earliest opportunity to undertake their sacred task through the delay of keeping the Sabbath day. Mark tries to stress this need they felt to go to the tomb, that they forgot to enlist help to roll the stone away. We hear that fear in their words.

Of course, as we all know there was no need, the stone was already rolled away and the tomb was empty. There are various versions of what was said and who was there in each gospel. This is from angels to Jesus himself, but for me one of the most moving accounts is in John. It is after all the commotion of where Jesus was, and who has taken him, there is Mary in tears. In the next few verses from verse fourteen, we have an account of Mary discovering the risen Jesus. Can you imagine her distress, her bewilderment, and her sense of joy all mingled into one. Mary and the other women discussing what had happened, they must have wondered what day it was. What could be happening and what will happen next? They must have had more questions than answers. Yet of course there was joy too. Jesus that was lost to them through death is miraculously alive.

In the next few weeks, many of these stories of Jesus' s resurrection will be retold. Of how Jesus appears to the disciples many times in many locations, including Thomas and his declaration of "My Lord and my God". We will also examine, I am sure, our own belief and faith. When things happen in life that astound, shock, and bewilder us, we often lose balance and they can even make us fall. A death of someone near to us can make us stop and we lose sight of the future and do not know the direction we are meant to go. Perhaps too there are other times we may move too fast, for we fear standing still, that we make mistakes. I am sure for the disciples, many of these thoughts and feelings came tumbling in. From locking themselves away in the upper room, to trying to return to their old lives, I sense that they tried to make sense of what had happened so suddenly.

I feel very much that is what all of us are doing now and will do for sometime to come. We are still in lockdown to a large extent even though we can meet outdoors now. Hopefully, life will return to some sense of a normality in the not too distant future, though we all suspect life will never be quite the same again. Wasn't that true also for the disciples? Nothing for them will be quite the same again. It will be them who will go on the mission field, preaching, teaching, and even healing, walking in the steps of the master. It will be them who are brought in front of various authorities and required to answer questions of faith. Yet they also had wait for God. This would be to equip them with the Holy Spirit which would enable them to do the things that Jesus asked of them. Perhaps that is what we may have to do as a church and as people. We may need to get our bearings before we move forward. We will all need healing from all that we have gone through over the past year. Also, there are things to come, as we all know covid has far from ended.

Jesus taught them for three years in the flesh before he died on the cross. However, after he rose from the dead, he did not disappear completely. Before the Ascension, Jesus met with them many times and he continued to teach them and help them adjust to a new situation. Isaiah 41 v 31 says, "those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength". This may be true for us too. There may be a need for a time of waiting and adjusting to a new norm, just as the first disciples did with the risen Lord. What is clear, is that Jesus did not leave them comfortless or alone. The Holy Spirit was there to lead and guide them into their future. But before all that, let us remember it is Easter, the day of new birth. So let us rejoice in the risen Lord. Jesus has turned death to life forever and given us hope, life, and joy in abundance.

I wish you all a joyous Easter.

God bless

Angela