

An Easter Message

Matthew 28 v 1 to 10

Alleluia - Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

This Easter our thoughts are going to be influenced by the largest global epidemic we have known in over a hundred years. For some, it is leading to loss of life, or loss of livelihood, and to major challenges for those at the front lines. For all of us, restrictions on our lifestyles, especially isolation from our friends and wider family, including our church family, at a time when we would want to be close. There is widespread fear, and uncertainty about the future.

Early on that first Easter morning the two Mary's who made their way to the tomb where Jesus lay, must also have felt bewildered. They were in grief and confusion. Perhaps wondering about all the things that Jesus had taught and done, and now all that seemed to be at an end.

What did it mean? How could God have allowed Jesus to die? Whatever else, they were united in grief, forced into what they thought was permanent "social isolation" from the Jesus they loved. Somehow they found the resolve to ensure that Jesus' body would at least be anointed and cared-for.

What a reception they got! First an angel who both terrified them and excited them as they were told that Jesus was risen from the dead. They ran to tell the others. Then Jesus himself met with them and told them not to be afraid, and to tell the other brothers to meet him in Galilee. Now they were full of joy and their hope was restored.

We have never known the dreadful times of Jesus' death, we live in the period when Jesus' rising from the dead is well known. But we share in both the hope and the challenge of that first resurrection appearance with the women.

The basis of their hope was that Jesus was with them again— and it reminds us that Jesus is with us. He is with us, and with our distant friends and families; with those who suffer and with all who are working at risk in the frontlines. We can be sure of his understanding and comfort. Jesus knows what it is like to live at a social distance – for all his life on earth he lived as a human being, at some distance from his father God, and he knew even the pain of total separation, the grief of death on the cross.

Jesus told the women to tell others the good news. This too is part of our hope. Not a clinging to the possibility of better times, but a call from the risen Jesus to share in what his life was all about – bringing God's love to others in the knowledge that it would necessarily involve pain and sacrifice. How encouraging it is to see so many prepared to put themselves out for others just now, from hospital staff to supermarket assistants, from home carers to NHS volunteers; from those who have to stay at home but cheer up others by phone and social media, to those who ensure that those isolated have food and medicine. Christ is alive!

Jesus' rising from the dead is the proof, however dark or bewildering our days that God is with us, that his promised Kingdom is already here, that we hasten it's fulfillment by our obedience and willingness to serve as Christ did. That nothing can separate us from the love of God.

So we share in celebration:

Alleluia - Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!