

The Parishes of Tavistock, Gulworthy and Brent Tor

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Easter is the revelation of Good News. As we worship and pray together as a Church community, I share with you my Easter message, recorded for our Easter Sunday Eucharist, and broadcast on Easter Day:

“Alleluia, Christ is risen” we triumphantly proclaim, and speak of resurrection life, and yet, I suspect if we are really honest, Easter raises as many questions for us, as it answers, for much pain and suffering and death remains in the world: the coronavirus, warfare, injustice, hunger and poverty have not yet been fully defeated.

Today, the total number of global cases of the coronavirus has exceed 1.5 million, including more than 100,000 fatalities, with over 8000 in the United kingdom. Thankfully, more than 370, 000 people worldwide are reported to have recovered.

People are suffering and continue to suffer. This year as we celebrate the victory of Christ over death, Easter is surely a time for questions - questions that call for honesty as well as for faith.

This is why I am struck by the openness and honesty of St.Luke, who in his Gospel says of the disciples: “While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering” (Luke 24.41a). While in their *joy*. The resurrection is Good News. With great integrity, the Gospels hold the tension between the themes of joy, disbelief, questioning, and the disciples’ experience of not fully understanding. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead brings joy and hope to the world - overcoming fear and uncertainty, and offering a new hope for the future.

St.Matthew records that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning. This is Easter Day. The stone has been rolled away and they can see inside the tomb. We can picture the scene in our minds. It is dark, cold, and uninviting. The body of Jesus is not there. We can see the discarded linen shroud, but little else. And suddenly there is a great earthquake and an angel of the Lord appears. “Do not be afraid” the angel says, “I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised.” (Matthew 28.5-6)

St.John records in his Gospel the meaning of the Resurrection: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3.16-17).

Now, just imagine you are with Mary Magdalen and the other Mary on that first Easter morning as dawn is breaking. What is *your* perspective – where are you standing “in the picture” as it were? What do you see? What is your understanding? Perhaps you see a cold, dark empty tomb, and little else? But just imagine for a moment that you are not standing outside the tomb looking in, but rather, you are in the tomb itself, on that first Easter morning surrounded by the darkness and silence – and, you are looking out through the entrance where the stone has been rolled away. In the darkness of disbelief and questioning, you can see outside the tomb. Christ has risen. The tomb is empty.

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Christ is in the world! And you can glimpse, just glimpse, the joy the breaking Easter dawn - the first dawn of the light that has now come. In the silence where Jesus' body had been, there is stillness, and a space for questioning and wondering - space to be honest about not fully understanding how death has been conquered and what this "new dawn" might mean. *But this has taken place* and the world will never be the same again.

Being honest about not fully understanding is to be human. I can easily identify with the questions and uncertainties of the first disciples: "While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering" (Luke 24.41a). It is St. Paul who has to remind us: "Now we see in a mirror, dimly". Even after the resurrection: "Now we know only in part" (1 Corinthians.13.12). We are people of faith and of hope who trust in God's ultimate good purposes.

The Good News of Easter, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is a message of hope for us and for the world. I want to affirm that God not only creates us, but sustains us throughout our lives. We live in God's world, in his kingdom - his kingdom in which Jesus is alive and active - his kingdom where there is still a great deal of "not yet" about life in this world. We are called people of the resurrection, because we *are* people of the resurrection, and God journeys with us and comes alongside us in our suffering, and offers comfort, love, hope and healing.

I want to assert and proclaim today, as loudly as I can, that the resurrection assures us that we are accepted and loved by God, and that we are not alone in the world. In these difficult and challenging times we are united in our prayers, and united in affirming together our faith and hope in the risen Lord.

I pray that today you may experience the reality of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Remain strong in faith and love.

Please stay safe and well, and follow Government advice. I look forward to resuming our activities in our churches as soon as it is safe and possible to do so.

In the meantime, I will continue to keep in touch by telephone, email/letter, and upload worship, prayers and reflections on our website, on Facebook, and on YouTube.

Please be assured of my continued love and prayers.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Christopher Hardwick
Vicar

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