

## **Easter Sunday 2021**

**Revd David Treharne**

### **Collect**

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.

*(or)*

God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

### **Post Communion**

God of Life, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection have delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Acts 10:34-43**

#### **Gentiles Hear the Good News**

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

### **John 20:1-18**

#### **The Resurrection of Jesus**

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.

#### **Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look <sup>[a]</sup> into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.' <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, <sup>[b]</sup> 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because 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."' <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

**Alleluia Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

**A very happy Easter to you all.**

## **Tutshill**

I am so pleased that we are celebrating Easter and the resurrection outside in the churchyard. What better place to gather than in the place where the resurrection story happened? What better place to gather than in the place where the resurrection hope is most needed?!

### **Sermon: While it was still dark (John 20:1)**

#### **Scene 1. Darkness and emptiness**

**“While it was still dark.”** These are the words that we have at the beginning of the gospel when Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb.

There is more to it than just the time of day when John writes “whilst it was still dark.” (John 20:1)

This is the Gospel that starts by saying the light has come into the darkness (John 1). This is gospel that quotes Jesus saying he is the light of the world (John 8:12). This is the gospel that says that when Judas betrayed Jesus and left to do the deed... it was night (John 13:30).

When John writes about darkness here he is talking about more than the time of day, he is talking about the experience of Mary... her emptiness, her grief and her desolation. He is also talking about all the darkness in us and in the world. Whilst it is still dark with war and evil. Whilst it is still dark with sin and death. Whilst it is still dark with suffering and pain.

The Gospel acknowledges and names the darkness: Mary’s darkness, our darkness, the world’s darkness. These 5 little words ‘whilst it was still dark’ acknowledge the rawest, most brutal and desperate parts of humanity

BUT the resurrection account also reminds us that God is present and active in it!!! Whilst it was still dark... resurrection has already happened. It was already Easter while it was still dark... for Jesus was already raised. Whilst Mary was wondering toing and froing Jesus was already risen.

God is present and active in the darkness! He is present, alive and active in the darkness of the Pandemic, war and famine, present and active in fear, loneliness, emptiness, isolation, worry, anger, frustration, pain and bereavement! He is present and active in the darkest depths!

St John Chrysostom said in his Easter homily “Hell took a body and discovered God!”

Darkness and death will not be the lasting and defining factor of our lives because Jesus is the light of the world who lives and reigns and he has conquered death and hell in and through his death and resurrection!

#### **Scene 2. Waiting and Finding**

After finding that the stone had been removed from the tomb, Mary goes and gets Peter and John. The 3 of them arrive and see the stone has been rolled away. Peter and John then seem to clear off back home again quite quickly. The Gospel says that John saw and believed, but he only believed that the stone had been rolled away. He didn’t believe that Jesus was risen from the dead and alive. They don’t hang about. They go back home.

But Mary stays! Mary waits. Mary takes a closer look.

This is a big reminder for us to sometimes take a closer look at things, to ask questions, to stay with the Lord (Stay with me, remain here with me Mark 14), to seek and to wait for God... “My soul waits for the Lord” (Psalm 130:5... there is a lot in this about waiting like a watchman). There is a big temptation for all of us when we are confused and hurting because Jesus’ promises don’t seem to be fulfilled, to leave, to go somewhere else, in confusion and disappointment we don’t wait, and we may stop hoping.

In her staying, in her waiting, in her remaining (a reminder of Jesus’ plea to stay and remain with him in Gethsemane) and looking Mary unexpectedly encounters, sees, finds, and realises... the most incredible thing!!!

Peter and John miss out on all of this.

However, for Mary the light breaks in and through the darkness. Jesus is risen. Jesus is alive! Light floods in!

At Christmas we often sing 'Light of the World, you stepped down into darkness'

The light of the world has stepped down into Mary's darkness, into Mary's emptiness, into Mary's pain, into Mary's grief, into Mary's brokenness, into death itself.

Contrary to what the disciples may have thought, Mary didn't manufacture this. It just happened, in the dark, in God's time.

Mary has the moment where Jesus speaks her name and the realisation happens.

Every morning, going downstairs in our house is one of the most beautiful and rewarding moments one could have. The moment when Leo realises we're there and we speak his name. He is beside himself!

Isn't it wonderful when there is a realisation of something truly wonderful? A few years ago on Easter Sunday we played a scene from the children's film Madagascar where Alex the Lion realises he has a mum and dad. It's a beautiful moment.

It's a beautiful moment when Jesus speaks Mary's name and realises it's him.

And when we too realise that Jesus is alive and present with us, when he speaks our name, when the light of God bursts into our darkness it's a moment of unparalleled joy!

### **Scene 3. Telling**

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

#### ***She told her story!***

The first story she told from her first visit to the tomb was "I have found an empty tomb." The second time she returned with "I have seen the Lord." It's no longer dark. He is risen!

Last year at one of our marquee services in the Vicarage we had an amazing time when several of those present shared, like Mary, something of their encounter with the risen Jesus. It was so inspiring! Many of us don't think we have much of a story to tell.

Like Mary, we need to find the courage to share our stories of faith, however insignificant they might seem. To tell of the times when we have noticed God's presence and God has come into our darkness with his light.

We have a gospel to proclaim!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! A wondrous glorious gospel of light penetrating the darkness.

Jesus turns the darkness to light

The despair to hope

The desperation into adoration

The sadness into joy

Where is it still dark for you this Easter Day? Christ is risen. He is present and active in the darkness whether we realise it or not. Wait and see, do not lose heart... the light has come and penetrates the darkness. And when you do notice tell it from the rooftops!

Happy Easter!