

Thought for Easter Day

Before you read what follows can I invite you to stop turn to your Bible and read Matthew 28 verses 1-10.

We find ourselves at a very familiar passage and yet as I read it to myself, I found that it felt as if it was brand new that I had never read this particular version of the Easter story before. I know of course that I have read it many times before and yet it has become like new.

It starts “at the beginning “at the dawn of the first day of the week.” Somehow there is great comfort in those words – the disciples were shocked their leader was dead there was no hope and yet the word dawn symbolises something new “a new hope”. Of course, it seemed impossible and as the events of the day unfold it still seems impossible and whilst here, we learn that Mary goes to tell the disciples we do not get told their reaction. I wonder how they reacted or indeed how I would I have reacted had I been there. Truthfully, I suspect I would have said, “Don’t be ridiculous we know he died he can’t have come back.”

Hope or despair? It seems that both words can bookend this passage. Perhaps the most important question is this - Which would you choose – hope or despair?

It seems to me that is the choice we face at the moment as we live in the shadow of covid19. Do we see this event as one of despair a situation we cannot control and which rules our life through the regulations and rules we must follow, or do we see hope within the situation? A hope that the world is being transformed by these terrible events. Hope that is witnessed in so many different ways – neighbours looking out for each other, conversations and offers of help from people who never spoke to you before. A bonding with family talking more even if its not face to face but by social media. A sudden openness to God a realisation amongst some that there must be more to life. These are all signs of a new dawn. At its heart Easter and the Resurrection have always been about a new hope and somehow that hope speaks more loudly when the world is in pain and despair. Interestingly on Thursday night as we stood outside clapping at 8pm a car drove past – a nurse going off duty seeing her as we clapped raised all our spirits and offered real hope

Matthew loves drama, violent earthquakes, an angel like lightning moving an impossibly big stone it’s a bit like a scene out of one of those 1970’s disaster movies such as “Earthquake.” It sets the drama the tension and asks how does anyone get out of here alive? It was so scary at the garden that the guards shook and became like dead men. It has the feel of everything lost and then we hear the angel say to Mary “Do not be afraid”.

At the moment of greatest darkness, the women are told not to be afraid. The moment of greatest darkness is the moment from which the dawn comes. It will get better, you will see a new dawn, the dawning of God’s plan being completed, the moment when you meet the resurrected Jesus.

The instruction is go and prepare everyone – tell the disciple what you have seen and heard so they too are prepared to meet Jesus.

The women leave “afraid yet filled with joy and ran to tell his disciples.” Easter is above everything else a message of hope for the future in the midst of adversity.

The women run off and before they get to the disciples they meet Jesus – and they worship him. He tells them not to be afraid and to go on and complete the task. He tells them to “go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me.”

Our calling in the midst of covid19 is to be there for others, to offer hope and to prepare them for whatever is ahead, to tell them not to be afraid, and to help them find a safe place where they can trust to the future because they too have met Jesus. We can do that because we know that our future is with God in eternity because we are already living in the dawn of a new day because we have met Jesus.

May you find God all round you on this special day.

Revd Nick