

Well I think we can all agree that this Easter is ... unusual. You are probably, like me, missing the special moments that we use to mark the occasion; the tingling expectation of the 'Service of Light', the fellowship and togetherness (and yes Tim the bacon) of our Easter breakfast, the joy and blessing of the Easter morning service itself. I know that I will miss the enthusiasm of Lucy-Kate's response to 'Alleluia! Christ is risen!' - all together now 'He is risen indeed, Alleluia!' Yes Easter 2020 will definitely be unusual – but that does not mean that we cannot celebrate the truth of the event.

Let us just stop and think about this for a moment.

The church has for centuries marked the passing of the Christian year with the liturgical seasons; Advent, Lent, Christmas etc. As a result we tend to get pulled into thinking of our faith in the same way but this is not the truth of what we believe.

Now I happen to think it is a good thing that we take the time to reflect on the highs and lows of Jesus's life and ministry. It is a good thing that we remind ourselves that it wasn't all plain sailing nor was it all hard and testing. I enjoy the variety of the worship through the various seasons; the changing of the liturgy (word stuff), the colours of the hangings, the different emphasis of the hymns and songs. BUT the reality of our faith is different. The truth is that, whilst we do well to remember the journey of Jesus' life, the reason for his existence was all down to his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection on Easter Day. Christ came into the world to save the world – and that was accomplished over 2000 years ago.

In other words, Easter is not just a day or a season, it is the reality of our faith EVERY SINGLE DAY.

There is a prayer response that is often used at this time of year – 'We are Easter people'. What then does that mean for us in our day to day lives, as we go through our own highs and lows? Well let's have a look at the disciples and what it meant to them.

Their world had crashed around them. Their friend was dead, they were hunted and in hiding and probably crushed by grief, loss and fear. Nothing was like they had imagined it was going to be a scant seven days before. They had no hope and their faith had probably gone into hiding as well. But that first Easter Day brought with it the news of Christ's resurrection – and that changed EVERYTHING.

Those who read my sermon from a couple of weeks ago may well remember that resurrection means – new life – a new beginning and it was certainly that for the disciples. Their world was made anew. Grief was replaced by joy, loss with unity, fear with hope. Faith was not just found again it was re-invigorated. They were still hunted and marked by the authorities – that hadn't changed – what had changed was their attitude to that fact.

The world, creation and eternity had changed – forever. No longer was humanity separated from God, no longer did our sinfulness hold sway over our destiny, the flaming sword over the gate to heaven was removed. Those without faith in Christ did not see the difference; I am sure the Sanhedrin and the Romans all thought it was business as usual, but the disciples saw and knew that love had conquered death and there was nothing left to hold them back. They saw that everything was different and that changed the way that they lived.

So that is what it means to be Easter people. Everything around us may carry on as though nothing has changed but we can see, feel and know that actually everything is different. Faith, hope and love should be at the core of our lives giving us all that we need to deal with whatever the world throws at us. Opening our hearts and minds to the truth of Easter helps us see the world anew and we, like the disciples back then, can stand tall and confident in God's love.

That does not mean that suddenly all is hunky dory; that nothing will go wrong and that life will be a breeze. Heck most of the disciples died a martyr's death; so don't run away with the idea that you are immune to the world (or any virus' that are in it regardless of what some of our American brothers and sisters are saying). What it does mean is that we carry within us the absolute knowledge that, as Julian of Norwich said, 'All shall be well, all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.' The bridge to eternity is fixed and, no matter what happens to this flesh and blood, our souls will be united with God.

We are Easter people, every day is Easter Day and so – no matter when we eventually get back together and the building is opened – expect me to yell, at the top of my voice, 'Alleluia Christ is risen – he is risen indeed, Alleluia!'

Happy Easter to you all – God bless.

Tracy