

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 103

Easter Sunday 4th April 2021

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

Happy Easter! The following is the text of the reading, reflection and prayers used in some of the Easter services today. There is no recorded service today.

Scripture Passage

John 20: 1-18

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.

² 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.”

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² 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.

¹³ 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.” ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

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.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ 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.’”

¹⁸ 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.

Reflection

During the celebration of Easter we move from the bleakness of the pain and suffering of Good Friday to the joy and hope of this Easter Sunday.

As we think about our experience in this past year we may feel that suffering (the Cross) has been very apparent in so many different ways. Maybe through the experience of bereavement and illness, maybe through the restrictions on social contacts with which we have all been living for so long.

On the other hand although there have been signs of hope, for instance in the form of new medical advances such as vaccines or timetables for easing restrictions, these still seem much more uncertain. Can we really rely upon these? Could this be a false dawn?

If we do feel like this then it can help us to look again at John's account of the Resurrection. For here also hope seems rather tentative to begin with.

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.

First of all it is still dark when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. It was impossible in that light for her or anyone else to see everything absolutely clearly.

It was impossible to see everything. Nevertheless it was possible to see something. And there was a surprise. The stone was not there.

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

But on its own this fact that the stone had been removed from the tomb was a mystery. What did it mean? In order to make sense of it, Mary and the other disciples who had come to the tomb needed to explain this surprising fact.

What Mary knows is that Jesus is not in the tomb, that it is empty. I suppose she could have rested content with this, have thought to herself 'Well, this is a bit of a mystery now but I'll just wait and I'm sure God will show me what it all means in His good time.' But which of us really would have done this? Is this how we naturally behave when faced with something we don't understand? So often we want to find an explanation, we need to make sense of what is going on around us.

So Mary made an assumption, she built a theory to explain what was going on, perhaps to make it less bewildering. And this theory was very reasonable and straightforward. Jesus' body must have been moved. So what she needs to do is to find the new resting place for the body.

And we can all understand and sympathise with this. And yet when we are confronted with the powerful workings of God, however reasonable our assumptions might be they can also be very dangerous. We too might assume that whatever else might have happened it could not possibly be true that Jesus had risen from the dead. But would we be open to God changing our mind on this or would our assumption prove to be a stumbling block to faith and to truth?

Mary Magdalene was open to God changing her mind and it is this which makes her such a powerful witness to the Resurrection.

However, at the beginning she assumes that Jesus' body has been removed and placed somewhere else. When the angels question her "*Woman, why are you weeping?*" her answer is simply, "*They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.*"

But what changes Mary's mind? It is her relationship with Jesus. She has known Jesus so well, He is someone whose voice she would recognise immediately if it came across in the course of a casual conversation.

Nevertheless she does not recognise Jesus immediately. Again her working assumption prevents her from doing this. She sees a stranger near the tomb and assumes that this must be the gardener. For it could not possibly be Jesus could it? But then Jesus speaks to her, very simply He just says her name, *Jesus said to her, "Mary!"*

And that is the moment of recognition. That is the moment when her relationship with Jesus overturns all her assumptions, however rational and sensible these might be. She now knows beyond any doubt that this is Jesus, that Jesus is alive and has risen from the dead.

But for all that, for all the joy that this brings her, there is still much that she does not understand. In her delight at having found Jesus alive, risen

from the dead, she wants to hold on to Him so that she will never lose Him again. But this is neither possible nor desirable. Jesus tells Mary very simply and clearly, *“Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father.”*

What is Jesus asking Mary to do? She could have held on to Jesus, have kept this moment of encounter with her risen Lord just between themselves, have bottled the joy of this moment up so that she would never lose it.

And yet she cannot and is not meant to do this. She needs to begin to understand that what has happened to her is just part of a much bigger picture. Jesus tells her that He is going to ascend to His Father. And when He does this so He will send the Holy Spirit on everyone who believes in Him. Through the Holy Spirit we are all given the opportunity to experience the joy and the power of the risen Jesus in our hearts.

Mary needs to learn that there is a bigger picture. And Mary also is given a task, that of being a witness to others. Even though her own understanding is still incomplete, she is to go to the other disciples and to say simply *“I have seen the Lord”*.

So this Easter with all the tentative signs of hope that we see around us what can we learn from Mary Magdalene’s journey?

Perhaps first of all the importance of openness. We all make many assumptions, indeed it is probably impossible to live without making assumptions. And yet are we willing to have these assumptions challenged by an encounter with God?

Maybe we have had an encounter with God which has challenged us. But what have we done with this? Have we tried to hold on to what might have been that wonderful flash of insight or joy, to bottle it up in our memories?

Or have we been willing to let go of it by sharing it with others and by being willing to grow in our understanding of the way in which God works?

For Mary is simply the first in a long line of Christian witnesses to the joy and the hope of the Resurrection.

We need a hope and a faith and trust that will not shift according to the latest news bulletin on the television, the internet or the newspapers regardless of whether this news is good or bad. We need to stand on the rock of faith in Jesus beneath our feet. Can we like Mary say those simple words to ourselves or to other people 'Yes, I have seen the Lord. My faith and trust is in the risen Lord Jesus.'

Tristram

Prayers

In joy and hope we pray.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his
glorious and life-giving resurrection

That isolated and persecuted churches
may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter

That we may care for and be generous to those who lack food,
work, or shelter

That God may reveal the light of his presence to the sick,
the weak and the dying,
to comfort and strengthen them

That God may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon
his people,
so that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection,

Merciful Father accept these prayers

For the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymns

Two of the well known hymns that were used in services around the Group are 'Jesus Christ is ris'n today' and 'Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son'.

Services after Easter

Services arranged to date are:-

Sunday 11 th April	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 18 th April	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 18 th April	11 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 25 th April	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

Please note that North Cadbury and Galhampton are holding joint services for the time being.

Excalibur

The April edition of Excalibur is now online at camelotparishes.co.uk

The Parish Office

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)