

Sunday 17th April 2022 Easter Sunday**Jesus is looking for us!****1st Corinthians 15: 19-26 & John 20:1-18**

There something incongruous in the Easter events.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, people made decisions and then put them into effect. Jesus, God's Son, a man who spoke of love and loved, who healed and challenged was hung on a cross and died. There is nothing incongruous (out of place) here for corruption, greed, injustice, lust, hatred, cruelty, racism, torture, murder and apathy kill people every day. They don't have to be old – any age will do, from a few hours through to great grandparents. There is little that would cause most of us, other than those who are psychopathic, to find enjoyment here.

The Cross of Golgotha is not a place for rejoicing. Rather it is a place of quiet self-reflection and tears. It is a place to hold on and yet let go.

But Easter Sunday, is for rejoicing, surely. For the Jesus who was dead is resurrected. The frigid zone of despair gives way to the light of new life. The feet of the women coming to the tomb suddenly change from quiet, soft, slow foot treads into swift running footsteps. The voices that were silent, muted, suddenly change in excited laughter. Despair gives way to gaiety.

As they rush by on their way back to tell the menfolk we catch a glimpse of them: those women who soon after dawn went sadly to tend the dead body of a much-loved friend. Now they are rejoicing as if the whole world had been put to rights.

The one who has hung on the Cross; had nails thrust into his hands and feet and a spear thrust into his side; the one who lay dead in a tomb for a few days is no longer in the tomb but is out meeting and greeting his friends.

This is rather of the unexpected and they did not recognise him. After all, who of us after coming from the cemetery would expect to meet a friend whom we had buried greeting us on the street a few days later. We would think we had seen a ghost or had made a mistake.

The message of Easter is clear – the story is not yet over. We haven't heard the punch line. If one word of advice comes from the Easter story it is, don't be premature in your judgement of what God is doing here.

The story isn't over yet. All that needs to be said hasn't been said. And all that will be seen hasn't been seen.

You see, we are not observers on the side-line watching from a distance. We are actors in the play, and participants in the game, if I can use such imagery, to refer to the events of the Easter story. The risen Jesus who sought out Mary at the Tomb, the doubting Thomas and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the disciples fishing by the Sea of Galilee, the guilt-ridden Peter who had denied Jesus three times – to them all Jesus showed up, searched them out and made himself known in gracious forgiveness and love. Jesus still searches for us in the same way.

Our story with God does not end at the Cross on Friday, as many people expect. The risen Christ shows up, transforming our painful sense of absence by his presence. In steadfast love, God refuses to leave us. Christ shows up and appears to the very ones (his own disciples) who betrayed and disappointed him.

The Gospel account of the appearance of the risen Christ seem, at times, to conflict with one another, to describe him as looking almost like a ghost, moving through locked doors, but still able to be touched, sitting down at table with him.

We may be concerned about these apparent discrepancies, but be patient with the disciples for they were trying to describe something that they find almost indescribable. Like us, their conventional modes of thought didn't quite give expression to what was taking place in their lives.

But the Easter message is one of Good News; we don't have to go looking for Jesus; he is looking for us. We don't have to search and find him; as he did with Mary and the other disciples, he finds us.

Which seems to me to be a good time to listen to Mithila sing, "I come to the garden alone.."

To God be the glory. Amen