

Sermon for Easter Sunday 2017

Alleluia Christ is risen – These wonderful 4 words proclaim that the new day has dawned - a new age in human history is born.

All things have become transformable, because what was impossible has been overturned. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. There is now hope for all of creation, where hopelessness once ruled.

Over the next 40 days, through the gospels narrative, we witness a collection of resurrection appearances.

After these 40 days we celebrate the ascension of Christ to the heavenly realm, and 10 days later, the promised the Holy Spirit descends and moves among us and we celebrate Pentecost.

In its entirety we call this holy time, *Easter tide* – the great 50 days of thanksgiving and triumph that speaks about the Christian Mystery as the absolute power of love in our lives.

In faith we believe that the disharmony between God and his creatures is overcome by Christ passion, death and resurrection and that all things have been reconciled to God through him.

Therefore in Christ we have been brought home to God, and we have the assurance that whether we live or whether we die we are the Lords.

In life, Paul tells us we should look for heavenly things; “set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” he says.

Now Paul doesn't mean that we are to walk around with heads raised and our eyes looking up to the heavens – for if we did that we would trip over all of life's obstacles before us.

He means that we can now glimpse the divine in the ordinary matters of everyday life, that the God who raised Jesus Christ now comes to meet us in the ordinary that surrounds us.

Just think for a moment what our world would be like if people saw each other as places where the Spirit of God dwells. If we saw others as gifts from God.

I'm sure we would all be reaching out across our back yard fences to our neighbors as well as across the oceans to our neighbors, with compassion, discernment, understanding and generosity rather than with fear and suspicion.

In death, it may look as if our relation with God comes to a halt.

But the tomb is empty. The stone that previously had symbolized the full stop to life, has been rolled away by the angel who sits on it in a conquering pose.

The empty tomb tells us that the violent and terrible death of Jesus does not stop God from giving what he wants to give, giving consistently and steadily.

Rowan Williams writes of God's faithfulness, "What the resurrection confirms to us is that we can count on the faithfulness of God - and therefore we are enabled to see death differently – not because it has stopped mattering or even hurting, not because we have assurance that we shall carry on as before (because we shan't), but because God has not finished with us. We have more to receive from our relationship with him. There is more to come. There is growth in love as we stand with, and in Jesus Christ."¹

The resurrection of Jesus Christ lies at the foundation of our Christian faith. It was a fundamental element of the apostolic gospel from the start. If Christ has not risen, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, our preaching and our faith is in vain.

It is our truth in which we live in faith– we have been reconciled to God through Christ eternally.

Today is a great day of celebration.

Christ is risen.

The tomb is empty and the Risen Lord goes ahead of us as the absolute power of love in our life in the present age and in the age to come.

The Lord be with you.

¹ Rowan Williams, "The Denial of Death" in *Choose Life: Christmas and Easter Sermons in Canterbury Cathedral*, Bloomsbury, London 2013, p.140.