

Sermon for Easter Sunday 2019. Rev'd Jenny Simson

Alleluia Christ is risen.

Today everything is bright – we have moved from the darkness of Good Friday when all hope in Jesus was lost, to the dazzling light of the empty tomb.

Alleluia Christ is risen - these words proclaim newness, freshness, and hope for all. The new day has dawned, love has emerged victorious. All things are possible, because what was impossible has been overturned. Or as Paul tells us in Corinthians, the final enemy- death has been defeated. The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives hope where hopelessness once ruled.

Now, as I'm sure we all agree, these words are all very uplifting, yet for some, what lurks in our hearts, is the question about the evil that still exists and has its way in the world.

There is no denying that we live in a troubled world and in this era of many different news and social media platforms, the details of how troubled it is, are available to us minute by minute accompanied by personal opinions that boldly express the causes of the trouble as well as the remedies for it.

The down side of our remarkable communication technology seems to be that we are becoming less inclined to find space and time for our quietness and reflection on what really matters in our world – where God is in all of this. Where is his presence, where is the vindication of the Easter event? Why is God seemingly so inactive?

Now this last question is not a new one. We heard it on Good Friday in the passion reading “if you're the son of God, come down off that cross. If you're God, prove it – do something about this situation now.”

But the ways of God are not like our ways –thankfully - for, judging by the opinions on social media many would like God to simplify things and be the good guy who makes all things right by getting rid of all that is bad. According to scripture God however has never been like this - so simplistic – so predictable –in fact God has been the opposite.

Scripture tells us that for centuries the people prayed for a messiah to come and get rid of the oppressors and the evil they perpetrated – and Jesus comes into the world helpless and born in a stable. When he grew up and set his face towards Jerusalem where he would confront the authorities, he didn't ride into the city on a white horse leading an army to overthrow the religious leaders of the day, or the Roman Empire. He entered on a donkey and let himself be crucified.

For those who watched on, with his death so ended his tenure as the hoped for messiah. But God who also watched on, turned the natural way of things about life and the finality of death upside down and the dead Jesus is resurrected.

This impossibility makes it clear that God's ways remain a mystery to us –they are beyond even our imagination. Even those who lived with Jesus and experienced the wonder of his authority first hand and heard him foretell his future path of crucifixion and resurrection- still did not understand. The gospel today makes that point clear - the women go to the tomb expecting to find corpse and the angel seems a little surprised to see them there: *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the son of man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows us that God is always at work in the world in such a way that enable things to become new again. The resurrection assures us that nothing is irrevocable. That it is

never too late to start over again. That nothing is irrevocable and that no sin is unforgivable, for the risen Jesus didn't seek recompense nor revenge on his enemies, he breathed forgiveness into them from the cross.

The resurrection assures us that there isn't any loss that can't be redeemed. The resurrection shows us that God never gives up on us, even when we give up on ourselves - God makes our crooked path straight, makes it possible to regain our lost humility, and regain our innocence. Every day is the new day dawned.

There is however a challenge in not only believing this but living in its truth. Being human, as we are, we are prone to falling by the wayside and returning to old ways - like cynicism, bitterness, tiredness and resentment. But as Peter reveals to the gentiles in the Acts reading today, the good news about the resurrection is that no doors are eternally closed. Faith in the resurrection opens all the doors to enable us to experience our own dying and rising, again, and again, and again. There is no limit to God's generosity and patience.

As theologian Ronald Rolheiser suggests: *No matter what we have done, nor how debilitating our attitude may have been, our future is forever pregnant with wonderful new possibility.*¹

Living in the reality that no matter our age, mistakes, betrayals, or wounds, we can each day begin afresh. This is the extraordinary promises of God about the glorious new creation come to fulfilment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fulfilled in a very personal way for you and for me.

The resurrection means that we are in the hands of graciousness and love. When the meaning of these words continue to grow in our hearts and minds, our life is not a mundane case of survival, but a life that looks for God's resurrection gift in everything that we do.

The Lord be with you.

¹ Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Passion and the Cross*. Franciscan Media: Cincinnati, Ohio, 2015. P.103