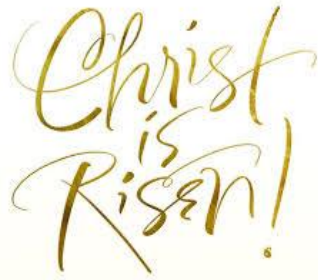


John 20 1-18 (Acts 10. 34-43) Easter Sunday St M & AA Audio 4/4/21



Christ
is
Risen!

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Isn't this good....I know some people are still shielding and being very careful and staying at home, but operating within the necessary guidelines to have some of the church community worshipping here in church is just wonderful! This is especially joyful in it being Easter Sunday. Things are often found to be more joyful when they follow times or occasions that have been difficult. Maybe that is why today there is a heightened sense of, if not overriding joy because of the pandemic and the very real sense of loss, brokenness and dismay, but there is certainly a feeling of hope, even if going forwards we are still not sure of how it will all work out.

But maybe this is why today resonates so much in the echo of the Easter Gospel we are here to celebrate. What seemed certainties in the dreams and expectations of a global people, for a life before them planned, has been turned upside-down by a pandemic and the deaths of so many loved ones. And so too all that the disciples had worked for and expected from life going forwards was dashed by the death of Christ. They were separated from love itself.

This need to be near love was what led Mary to the tomb for she couldn't bear to be separated from Jesus in life or in death. Weeping at the tomb for her beloved, Jesus came to her once more. Mary reached toward him but was told not to touch. This desire to embrace the warmth of those we love and from whom we have been separated from in a hug is immense. Some things don't change!

Instead Mary is commissioned to be the Church's first Easter preacher and is sent to be the bearer of Good News to the disciples "I have seen the Lord." In effect saying 'I have seen LOVE". If one asks where was God, where was Jesus, where was love in the pandemic? The answer is clear to see in all those who answered the call to be sent, to go and

serve others in a time of need, just as Mary stepped out beyond her need for a hug to serve the need of others, those needing to hear that love was not dead but risen.

New seemingly surprising heroes have arisen. Hospital staff, emergency workers, shop workers, delivery drivers and food providers have rightly replaced the idols of fame and fortune. But this reversal of societal expectations is nothing new to the Gospel as poet and singer-songwriter Malcolm Guite recounts in his sonnet "Mary Magdalene"

*Men called you light so as to load you down,
And burden you with their own weight of sin,
A woman forced to cover and contain
Those seven devils sent by Everyman.
But one man set you free and took your part
One man knew and loved you to the core
The broken alabaster of your heart
Revealed to him alone a hidden door,
Into a garden where the fountain sealed,
Could flow at last for him in healing tears,
Till, in another garden, he revealed
The perfect love that cast out all your fears,
And quickened you with love's own sway and swing,
As light and lovely as the news you bring.*

For many around the world the tears are still flowing and even the thought of the process of healing may still be too painful to bear. However Easter reminds us that the ways of God are not our ways, yet we are called like Mary to go out in the world, just as we are, to be the people Christ called us to be and to play our part in sharing his healing love with the communities we serve, for perfect love truly cast's out all fears, for Christ is Risen...He is Risen indeed... Alleluia!

Acknowledgments

Mary Magdalene by Malcolm Guite