**Easter Sermon 2021 Gospel of Mark**

Not all Easter Day readings are the same, the message is always the same, but the scriptures do vary, today we have the gospel of Mark, and I just love him because in my mind, he just tells you how it is!

He’s very practical and honest, first he tells us about the three women making their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus and he has them wondering… how are we going to move that great big ol’ stone away when we get there, so it’s not surprising that the first thing they notice when they do get there is that that big ol’ stone has already been rolled away… they must have thought, eh up what’s going on here then… let’s go and have a look and then to their utter surprise again they see Jesus’ body missing and if that wasn’t enough sitting nearby they see what has been described as an angel and Mark recalls in verse 5 ‘ and they were alarmed’… well you would be wouldn’t you!

But this angel is definitely on to them because the first thing he says is, ‘don’t be alarmed’ and as if he is mind reading, he then seems to pre-empt every question they are about to ask him and responds in one continuous sentence.

‘You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’ It’s almost as if he has given them a Boris’s road map!

Then immediately after this has happened the women are described as ‘Trembling and bewildered’ and I say again well you would be wouldn’t you.

And then they fled from the tomb.

I have always wondered what the women must have discussed with one another after this experience.

Imagine the biblical scriptures capturing the first moment of them stopping for breath after they fled, the strained, confused yet joyful looking faces as they all stare at each other in disbelief… the big moment when it dawns on them that he really has risen from the dead, and subsequently the deeply profound realisation that the world has now changed forever, death is no more, in him eternal life is now ready for the taking.

When we read about Jesus, and all the different things he did in his life and relatively short ministry, we can take so much excellent morality and goodness from his teachings, that we sometimes forget about the enormous act of sacrificial love that he did for us, the moment of Easter is the whole point of Christianity, Christ died so that we may live… what an incredible gift, but what does that really mean for us?

The biggest fear we hold in life, is death, when we think of those that we have loved, and lost, it brings back so many emotions doesn’t it, some good and sometimes some bad too, but the pain of eternal separation between yourself and a loved one, is the greatest chasm you will ever bear.

So, the thought, that someone, some divine entity, could take that away, is a pretty awesome gift for humanity to receive. You see we might not understand it but know this when Christ hung upon that cross, in agony, he bore the sins of the world, so we don't have to. In that willing act of suffering and obedience to death, he burst open the gates of eternal life. And heaven became accessible and real to us all!

Jesus says “I go and prepare a place for you; that where I am, there you may be also. In other words, when he cries out from the cross, “it is finished”, it really means that part of his mission is complete, so we will never be finished!

Today we celebrate together with each other and all the company of heaven, that’s a phrase you regularly hear me say in the eucharistic prayer. It means that not only are we gathered here today, but also all those we bring with us in our hearts and minds both alive and dead. You see whichever side of the veil you stand on, collectively we all stand together, celebrating and praising and being loved by the very same God. It’s always such a wonder to think that my mum who resides on the other side is being loved by the very same God who sits with me in the quiet of the morning.

I guess we will never truly know this side of heaven, why Christ had to be slain in such a way for us to have eternal life, but what we do know is that through this action we have been given a promise that death is not the end. We have been given a promise, that God’s love is bigger than the complexities that death brings, and that life eternal is now a freedom we hold.

So, on this Easter Day, be joyful, be the happiest you have ever been, because know this, Christ is risen, and because he rose again, so we, and all who we have loved, can rise with him too.

In a world that is so troubled the Easter story is one of those stories that despite the misery of Holy Week, and Good Friday, really really does have a happy ending, and it's an ending that continues, right into eternity.

So, let’s now return for a final moment to the ladies at the tomb, how are we reacting to the Easter scene today? We might not be talking to angels or a physically risen Lord, but we are on a similar roadmap. We like them are being woven into the very fabric of salvation history itself.

We like them have a reason to be overjoyed, sometimes bewildered yes, but ultimately overjoyed.

Like the women, how we perceive what has happened, what we celebrate today is entirely up to us, to welcome Easter is to fully acknowledge that

Christ loves us, unconditionally, in this world, and the next!

To welcome Easter means sharing in the ultimate hope “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

To welcome Easter, means knowing that no matter what in the end as is promised… all will be well.

So, I say with a full and open heart to you all my friends:

Happy Easter, Christ is risen - he is risen indeed! Amen