EASTER SUNDAY STOWE 31/3/24

**JOHN 20:1-18 the Resurrection**

Our Bible reading today is the turning point in history – the fulfilment of God’s salvation plan for his creation. It is the day Christians celebrate above all others.

Jesus died on the cross, took all the evil that the world had to offer and died FOR US. But his sacrifice and suffering led to salvation because he didn’t stay dead, he didn’t stay in the tomb! As we heard in John’s Gospel the tomb was empty, the stoned was rolled away and Jesus was ALIVE. His resurrection is mentioned on 13 separate occasions in the Bible, many written about in more than one book of the Bible.

Here in John’s Gospel we hear of Mary finding the tomb empty and running to Peter and John, who then ran themselves to also find the empty tomb. John writes that he understood straight away that Jesus had risen, Mary however was distraught and spoke to angels that were in the tomb – she didn’t understand yet and was still mourning Jesus’ death. And Jesus himself appears to her and when he says ‘Mary’ she recognises him. What must she have felt? amazement, puzzled by another miracle and above all Joy to see Jesus alive again.

The resurrection of Jesus brings salvation as God rescues his creation from evil and death – one act for all people and all time. God’s victory.

And also the resurrection of Jesus is incredibly personal – for it is for me, and for you and for each person here. It is God reaching out in love to each one of us as individuals.

Now I have 3 boxes here and they are very heavy – one is my past, one my present and one my future, and they are all very very heavy.

PAST – this box is heavy with regrets – all the things I have done wrong, that I wish I hadn’t done, that I feel guilty and ashamed about. It makes me feel sad and I carry the weight of them around with me.

But if we lift it up now, after Jesus’ resurrection, it feels really light! And if we look inside it is empty except for one thing – a bill/receipt. Because Jesus has paid for my sin by his death. The weight of guilt and regret I felt has gone, because through Jesus death and resurrection God offers us forgiveness if we are truly sorry.

PRESENT -this box is heavy with worry. All the things that are on my mind today, all the people and situations I am worried about in this busy pressurised world.

But if we lift it up now, after Jesus’ resurrection it feels light! And if we look inside there is only one thing in it. A cheque, a blank cheque signed by God! Because Jesus’ death and resurrection have restored my relationship with God, he is with me right now through his Holy Spirit and he helps me, he carries my burdens with me and helps me with each situation. 1 Corinthians 1 says that ‘the cross is God’s power’ and if I have the power of God with me, I have help and security and am not weighed down anymore.

FUTURE – this box is heavy with the uncertainty of what is round the corner. The fear of the unknown and the inevitability of death can weigh me down.

But if we lift the box now, after Jesus’ death and resurrection it feels light! And if we look inside we see only one thing – the dove of peace. Because living in relationship with God, guided by His Holy Spirit means that we can face uncertainty with hope and optimism. There may be difficulties ahead but we won’t face them alone, God will be with us helping us. And ultimately when my time comes, I have the sure and certain hope of eternal life with God in heaven, because Jesus is THE WAY. This gives me security and peace in a way that nothing else can.

This is why we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, because through it God offers us forgiveness for the past, restored relationship and support in the present and the promise of eternity with him in the future, in his kingdom where God’s love rules and evil is no more.

JESUS IS RISEN! ALLELUIA! HAPPY EASTER

NB The idea for the 3 boxes comes from the BRF