



Greenway's Benefice Weekly Devotional (No. 4)

Easter Sunday - 12th April 2020

Bible Reading - John 20:1-18

**Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**



Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes
Where Thy body lay.

Lo, Jesus meets us,
Risen from the tomb!
Lovingly He greets us,
Scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness
Hymns of triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth,
Death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt Thee,
Glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without Thee:
Aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors,
Through Thy deathless love;
Lead us in Thy triumph
To Thy home above.

*Thine be the glory, Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

It was early on Sunday morning. The first glimmers of dawn were casting haunting silhouettes across distant hills, but the garden was still in darkness. The full moon had long since set, and the whole world was waiting – waiting for the dawn. It was as if all creation was holding its breath...

A lone figure creeps through the darkness – stumbling on the unfamiliar path, blinded, not just by the darkness, but by the tears that just kept coming – and bowed down by grief that felt like a spear in her heart.

She reaches her destination – she looks and feels for the stone that she knew covered the gaping opening to the cave... It's not there!

She looks around, her eyes straining in the semi-darkness. There it is – lying on the grass, thrown aside like a child's toy. The tomb is open ... but not just open – it's empty! He's gone!

Panic ... fear ... bewilderment ... all manner of emotions sweep over her. She turns and runs ... and from there on everything blurs into total confusion. Running footsteps, shouting voices, others coming and going ... then suddenly it's quiet again.

The sun is rising now – shadows become tangible forms. Birdsong begins to fill the air. Light flows into every corner – except into her heart, where there is still darkness and confusion.

Then, through her tears she sees a figure... just standing there ... looking at her. Who is He? Who would be here, in this hidden place, so early in the morning? It must be the gardener!

She pours out her heart to Him, hardly knowing what she is saying. He gently interrupts her with one word ... her own name, "Mary!"

Suddenly her whole world is changed. All the darkness, the pain, the agony of the last few hours, days, years even – fades into insignificance, swept away, in a moment of recognition and revelation ... He's alive! .. He's ALIVE!

If only that moment could last for ever - there, kneeling at the feet of the one who had transformed her life. But the words of her Lord penetrate her heart: "Go – share the news – there are others who need to hear – go and tell them I'm alive!"

The resurrection of Jesus was without doubt THE turning point in the life of Mary, of those early disciples, and of the countless millions who have met with Jesus since.

The resurrection of Jesus is the one point that make the Christian faith unique – because the Christian faith IS Jesus! It came into being at that moment, when the tomb was opened and Christ burst out into endless day!

We live in a world of darkness, confusion, fear, gloom and despair. And nowhere is that despair deeper than where the resurrection of Jesus is unknown.

When we meet with Jesus and KNOW that He is alive - our circumstances may not change – the old difficulties and challenges of life may still be there - but we can see them through God's eyes, and face them in God's strength.

Just as the voice of Jesus penetrated the darkness and fear in Mary's heart, we too can know his peace. When we reach out in faith and meet Him, like Mary we discover that He knows us each by name! He knows our circumstances, our fears, our loneliness and our pain – and promises us his peace. Because when you meet the risen Jesus, life takes on new meaning, new purpose and new hope!

Writing to persecuted believers in 1st Century Rome, the Apostle Paul said, *“the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you”*. (Romans 8:10-11). That is AMAZING! The power that raised Jesus from the dead is available in us today!

And when you're living in the power of the resurrection of Jesus, you suddenly find that God is on your side - and NOTHING can separate you from his love!

In Mark's Gospel account of the resurrection, we read the words of an angel to Mary; “Don't be alarmed ... Jesus has risen... He's going ahead of you into Galilee”.

So on this resurrection morning, in all the anxieties and challenges of the present world situation, the message of Easter comes to us afresh today: “Jesus is alive – he's going ahead of you”.

Yes, we may face the uncertainties of empty towns, empty shops, and even empty churches – but as God's resurrection people, we can celebrate an empty cross and an empty tomb! And because of that, our future is secure!

Alleluia, Christ is risen.
He's risen indeed, Alleluia!

On this Easter Sunday, can I invite you to join with me in a short prayer. Owing to present circumstances, we may feel alone – but in prayer we can join with Christians around the world, as we celebrate the Good News of Easter:

Loving Lord and heavenly Father, we worship you this morning, as we rejoice that Jesus is risen from the dead! He has won the victory over evil, death and destruction, and lives to walk with us in our daily lives.

Lord Jesus, you took on the crushing burden of human sinfulness – and nailed it to your cross. You endured the full force of human hatred – and overcame it with love. You entered the darkness of death – and through it opened up the way to everlasting life. You took on the powers of evil – and triumphed over them by your resurrection.

Thank you, Lord, that your risen power can give us your eternal hope in our hearts and lives, as we face today's challenges, because you are with us every step of the way.

Thank you Lord, Amen