

Easter Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022

St Mary's, 8am

## **The Meaning of Easter**

If someone today claims that a miracle has occurred, and it was shown that something unexplained and contrary to all expectation had indeed taken place, we might regard it as an interesting phenomenon, but no more. In contrast to that, the first Christians claimed that the Resurrection of Christ was not just a miracle unlike any other miracle, but that it had cosmic significance; that it was and is the decisive event in history for a true understanding of every human life and indeed the universe itself. How could this be?

Life is a gift, and it comes to us humans with the special blessing of being able to think and choose and love. That is what we mean by being made in the image of God. But we are on this earth not just to express that image but to grow into the divine likeness, that is, to grow in our capacity to attend- to the world about us, to other people and God. To de-centre ourselves and focus on the other. To transcend the clamant ego in genuine care and concern. To live, in short at one with the ground of our being and the goal of our longing, in an ever-deepening communion, for this what it would be; and in this way we would reflect the divine likeness.

But you only have to hear, see or read the news and to realise that something has gone terribly, terribly wrong. Instead of moving steadily along the road from being made in the divine image to reflect the divine likeness, we have defaced the image. Humanity has veered off course and lies half wrecked in a ditch.

To pull this wreck out of the ditch and back on the route God first prepared a people who were called in a special way to live out his project for humanity in their communal life. Then he himself, in the person of his eternal word and wisdom, appeared, proclaiming the divine kingdom and inviting people to live under the divine rule. He lived his life in intimate relationship to the one he called Abba, Father. In his ministry he taught that God is always seeking us out to bring us back to himself and in his ministry, he lived this out-only to be rejected and killed. That should have been the end of it. But it wasn't. A dynamic new movement sprung up led by people convinced that death had not destroyed

him, that he had been raised to a universal contemporaneity, that he lives as God lives at the heart of every life. They were further convinced that his life had all along been a life totally at one with the Father to whom he had given himself and that in him heaven and earth, God and humanity, were joined never to be unjoined.

Moreover, they claimed that this new reality in Jesus was brought about for the sake of every single man and woman, indeed the whole universe, all were called and destined to be drawn into this unbreakable union, this love of God in Christ, from which as St Paul said, nothing, not even death, can now separate us.

That is why the Resurrection of Christ which we joyfully celebrate today is of cosmic significance- whether people hear it or not, heed it or not, it is the meaning and reality of our lives. The union, the communion of God and humanity.

And perhaps you would agree with me that if what I have said is true it must make a total difference to the way we see life and try to live it. Everything else takes its significance or lack of significance in relation to that supreme reality.

When I was a young man with very little in the way of religious background, the thought came into mind: If the Christian faith is true it needs to be at the centre of life. If it is untrue, better drop it altogether. That still seems to me the case. It is not of course at the centre of my life, far from it, there is a long way to go and only a short time left. But that choice is there for me and for us all. As Eliot put it at the end of *East Coker*

Old men ought to be explorers

Here or there does not matter

We must be still and still moving

Into another intensity

For a further union, a deeper communion-

That deeper communion which Christ has brought about for us all.

So, the church proclaims today and every day, "Christ is risen"

and as we go out of the church on this glorious spring morning,

all nature will reply "He is risen indeed."