



Read the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter sermon preached during the 8.10am service of Holy Communion at Canterbury Cathedral this morning. The service was broadcast on Radio 4 - listen again [here](#).

Read the sermon as delivered:

This morning what did you wake up to?

In the UK, we might be waking up to lighter mornings and warmer days, but families across the country are waking up to cold homes and empty stomachs as we face the greatest cost of living crisis we have known in our lifetimes. And because of this they wake up with fear.

Further afield, people are waking up to horrors they never imagined possible. Last month, President Zelensky gave a speech in which he said ‘the end of the world has arrived’. Ukrainians have woken up to the end of the world as they knew it. Now they are awakened by the noises of war, and the sickening reality of terror. They wake up to mortal fear.

Imagine Mary’s waking thoughts on that first Easter morning. Her state of mind must have been grim. The deepest desire for it all to be different. Anger at the disciples for running away. Misery at the thought of the task before her.

Such a sense of helplessness will have been common this morning. Many will be awakening in refugee camps, separated from loved ones still on the front line, grieving for those missing, raped, abused, or killed. Wondering how to cope. Mary and her companions did not know how to cope with the stone in front of the tomb. “What will we do?”

This bad awakening was justified. The tasks were impossible. The events of the past days traumatic. Strength could not meet the demand. For many in this country the news from Ukraine is terrible, but the rising cost of power, fuel and basic food will be the first and overwhelming thought of the day. For others it will be the continued deep sense of loss of someone from Covid, or during Covid, to whom they could not say a proper farewell. The news might move on, but grief does not.

Others will be struggling at work, or feel a deep sense of injustice at the way they have been mistreated by family, friends or employers. Sorrow is often a private burden, betrayal a private wound, grief and disappointment private agonies. We focus on the great events of the day in the news, rightly: yet every life has its own traumas, joys, celebrations and laments. The first Easter was experienced by individuals, not by the world on social media.

What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have to say not just to our common fears, but to those that are individually felt?

First, God doesn't just recognise the horrors and the sufferings of the world: he enters into them on the Cross. In dying for us, he sees and knows the wounds that cause us so much pain. He hears the cry of the mothers in Ukraine, he sees the fear of boys too young to become soldiers, and he knows the vulnerability of the orphans and refugees. Closer to home, he sees the humiliation of the grandparent visiting the foodbank for the first time, the desperate choice of parents in poverty and the grief and weariness of the pandemic.

The resurrection of Jesus is not a magic wand that makes the world perfect. But the resurrection of Christ is the tectonic shift in the way the cosmos works. It is the conquest of death and the opening of eternal life, through Jesus a gift offered to every human being who reaches out to him. Not just for individuals, but setting a benchmark for every society because God is Lord of every society and nation.

This is what we proclaim at Easter. It is a season of life and hope, of repentance and renewal. This week in the Eastern Orthodox world it is Holy Week, the greatest time for repentance. Muslims are in Ramadan, a time for purification and change, coming to Eid. Jews celebrate the Passover and liberation. Let this be a time for Russian ceasefire, withdrawal and a commitment to talks. This is a time for resetting the ways of peace, not for what Bismarck called blood and iron. Let Christ prevail! Let the darkness of war be banished.

And this season is also why there are such serious ethical questions about sending asylum seekers overseas. The details are for politics and politicians. The principle must stand the judgement of God and it cannot. It cannot carry the weight of resurrection justice, of life conquering death. It cannot carry the weight of the resurrection that was first to the least valued, for it privileges the rich and strong. And it cannot carry the weight of our national responsibility as a country formed by Christian values, because sub-contracting out our responsibilities, even to a country that seeks to do well like Rwanda, is the opposite of the nature of God who himself took responsibility for our failures.

Through the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, God gives our lives purpose and our society resilience. God calls nations to live in the knowledge of God's love through Jesus, springing up in us by the gift of God's Spirit as permanent place of refreshing in dry places, and hope in dark places. That is true global power.

More than that, the resurrection, in its conquest of death, promises each individual a life that is abundant and will overflow into eternity.

It promises each nation, and every victim and survivor, that the injustices, cruelties, evil deeds and soulless institutions of this world do not have the last word.

That last word is God's victory shout, the offer of life as possession, of a death sentence for the wickedness of this world, of justice against the evildoer. None will escape justice, and all are offered mercy where there is true repentance, sorrow for sin and surrender to Christ.

Jesus is alive – and he addresses head on all of our fears, together and alone. It means whilst we wake in a world so often characterised by pain

and suffering, there is another more defining, more compelling, more true story to wake up to.

It is not complicated to receive the gift of the life of Christ. It costs no more than to surrender our lives to God, lives we cannot keep. In that surrender we join the journey into life everlasting, we are caught in his hands as was Mary who returned to the disciples saying “I have seen the Lord”.

Jesus’ resurrection, dead first, now alive, changed history. It changed societies, shaped nations. It calls us each to live resurrection shaped and filled lives now, and to mould resurrection filled societies in our world today and in the future.

6 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/sermons/archbishop-justins-sermon-easter-day-holy-communion-canterbury-cathedral>