



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY



Lift up your heart, lift up your voice

Rejoice, again, I say, Rejoice!

These words, the refrain of Hymn VIII of Charles Wesley's 'Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection', express the joyful cry of the human soul at the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection is a cause of joy. It is the source of ultimate joy, for in the resurrection Jesus won victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15. 57). The resurrection happened at a particular time and in a particular place but its significance is eternal and universal. God purposed the salvation of this fallen world and creation looked towards the day that darkness would be put to flight. God willed the salvation of this fallen world and from that day the Church has lived in the radiant brightness of our triumphant King. In the sixth century the priest and poet Venantius wrote:

'The light, the heaven, the fields and the sea duly praise the God ascending above the stars, having crushed the laws of hell. Behold, He who was crucified reigns as God over all things, and all created objects offer prayer to their Creator.'

From the first Easter Day Jesus' disciples have made known the Good News of the Resurrection. The risen Lord told Mary Magdalene not to hold on to him, but to go to tell the disciples. She did so, proclaiming, 'I have seen the Lord.' (John 20. 17-18). On the mount of the Ascension Jesus addressed his friends, saying, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' (Matthew 28. 19-20).

The disciples (followers) thus became apostles (those who are sent). The Church has stood in that apostolic tradition ever since: both as those who profess the faith of the Apostles and as those who share in their task of evangelism.

I send this letter at a difficult time in the lives of many peoples and nations. Creation suffers from the effects of human neglect and selfishness; people continue to suffer as a result of war and terror; political and economic systems creak under the twin threats of extremism and apathy. Our world is in desperate need of hope. As Christians we have a message of sure and certain hope to proclaim. On Easter Day in Churches throughout the world Christians will sing, 'Christ is Risen! Christ has conquered! Now his life and glory fill you!'

Our proclamation of the hope which is ours in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be both confident and humble. In our complex and plural world our evangelism must not be forced on others, but as followers of Christ we have a duty to bear witness to our faith: to speak of hope for the world in the Resurrection of Christ, a message seasoned with gentleness and respect. Our actions of love, compassion, respect and gentleness confirm that the message we share is indeed good news.

I started this letter with a quotation from Charles Wesley (1707-88). Along with his older brother John, Wesley devoted his life to the service of the gospel – preaching the good news in season and out of season and transforming both the church and the lives of those who heard the message. In another hymn he echoed the call of Christ to Mary Magdalene which is, in turn, the call of Christ to each of us:

'Go tell the Followers of your Lord, Their Jesus is to life restored.'

May God bless you this Eastertide and may the resurrection joy that we share spread throughout the world.

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

3 min read

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