



Death is the greatest and most devastating liar. The lie that the final breath is the end, there is nothing more. The lie that we will always be separated from those we have loved, ultimately losing those we love for ever.

We all know the finality of the death of a friend or family member. When something special happens our instinct is immediately to tell them, to call them. Then we remember. They're not here.

Of course death matters. It is brutal, terrible and cruel. But it lies when it claims to be the final word.

Easter calls time on the lie. The women in Mark's gospel had believed the lie – going to the tomb to anoint a dead body. Yet all their fears were based on a false assumption about the power of death and an inadequate understanding of the power of God.

Instead right there in the grave were signs of resurrection. The action of God was revealed through angels who greeted them, reassured them, and told them that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised.

This news changes everything - overwhelming every assumption about the way the world works. Mark tells us that “they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them!”. Well they might! Their whole understanding of things was changed.

The truth sets us free. Lies bind us, enslave us. And no lie binds more tightly than the lies of death. If death is telling the truth, then we may as well live for ourselves. Then the last year is yet another cruel period of history taking from us those we loved, ending lives cruelly and tragically.

But because Jesus who was dead is alive: death is a liar. The truth of Christ is the reality, we have certain hope and a changed future. We will be reunited with those we love. We are offered forgiveness and freedom to live God's new life as a gift – to be taken or ignored.

How can we respond? We live in a new world in which everything is changed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That has been true for this country for over 1,500 years. It cannot be ignored or forgotten. Not to respond is to respond.

For each of us. We can receive this new reality. Jesus, crucified and risen, is alive today and brings life and hope. The joy and purpose he gave to the disciples is exactly the same as is offered to us today. We are each and all invited to accept that new reality, welcoming the living dynamic presence of God into our lives - allowing the one who conquers the greatest lie to give us the greatest life. I urge you to take this offer of life today with a simple prayer, “Jesus Christ, with all my doubts and all my failings and wrongs, I want you to rule in my life”. Simple, almost banal, transforming.

For the church. We can then live with the risen Christ, doing what he calls us to do. The disciples not only have private hope but hope for the world. That is why the church gets involved with resisting injustice, treasuring our world, tending the needy – it's why Christians throughout the centuries have lived with compassion and love for all who are excluded and marginalised. They breathed the oxygen of hope through the resurrection of the crucified God. The church exists to be Jesus Christ to the world.

To the world. As the resurrection bursts out of the tomb and floods the world so the church must go out with that torrent of good news and love, transformed, celebrating and declaring in word and deed the truth that death is a liar and that life is offered to all. In this country, in this world we have a choice over the next few years. We can go on as before Covid, where the most powerful and the richest gain and so many fall behind. We have seen where that left us. Or we can go with the flooding life and purpose of the resurrection of Jesus, which changes all things, and choose a better future for all. The overwhelming generosity of God to us should inspire the same by us, in everything from private acts of love and charity to international aid generously maintained. We have received overwhelmingly, so let us give generously.

Death deceives. Christ is the truth, for He is risen indeed. Let our lives change. Let the Alleluias ring.

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