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The things that are on the one hand most straightforward and decisive often carry with them the greatest implications and consequences. It's true of love – the strongest of all emotions with the widest repercussions. It is true of faith – the simple act of trusting lived out in a thousand complicated ways. It is true of life. It is true of death.

On this day we celebrate the simplest of events, the historic reality of the resurrection of Jesus, on the third day, after his execution and burial.

The Resurrection is a slow-burning explosion that changes individual lives, groups of people, whole societies, the course of history and the structure of the cosmos.

It was always of cosmic impact, all heaven rejoices, the world has shifted. The creator became one of his creatures, experienced mortality and shifted the patterns of reality. Like the birth of Jesus at the beginning it was experienced only by a few people in a few places - yet through the power of God the news of the Resurrection opened new life to all who heard it, and led them in new directions of which they could not imagine. God's nature is to give us space to respond, space to ignore him, in this life. Of course, that choice has consequences now and beyond the grave, but we are wooed, not compelled, to follow Christ.

Whilst at the empty tomb we are on the very edges of mystery, we are confronted with the simple wisdom of God: Jesus Christ, the one that was truly dead, is now truly alive. Since Jesus is risen from the dead, he is alive to be met and known by you and by me.

The Resurrection demonstrates God's conquest of death – which no other human being has ever defeated. We are invited to share in that conquest of death. With Jesus alive from the grave everything is different - we have the offer before us of life, hope and purpose in relationship with God. A channel of communication with God is offered, a relationship created, which we had no way or means to open by ourselves: it would be unimaginable were it not the sovereign work of God.

Mary Magdalene, the apostle to the apostles, meets Jesus – an encounter which was beyond her wildest hopes. She had gone to mourn, to ensure a proper burial for Jesus, to be near the body of the person who changed everything for her. That is what human beings have done and always will do when they lose someone who is dear to them. They go to the place of burial to feel close to them. They may sit and talk to them. They may recall their voice. Yet in all those things they know that the physical presence of the one they loved is no longer with them, and there is a gap in their lives that cannot be filled.

Imagine how Mary felt when suddenly that gap was filled, and the one who had been dead was encountered as alive, standing next to her, giving her instructions. It was the beginning of all her futures, of life that overcame suffering, fear and death, as it is for us.

It is only the beginning. The Acts of the Apostles tells how the news of the resurrected Jesus spread beyond its Jewish roots, and reaches every person on earth, offering life and hope not only then but now, to each of us here.

Peter, Jesus' companion and disciple, was so transformed by the hope of the Resurrection, that when invited some time later he broke every rule

in the book to go to a Gentile house – the house of Cornelius, a Roman, a member of the occupying power's army. There he tells them the story of Jesus and His resurrection.

As Cornelius and his household listen, the barriers between them and God are blown down by the inrushing wind of the Spirit of God, who gives them also life and hope.

These transformations proclaim hope for us. Out of the simplicity of the death and resurrection of Jesus we run the danger of building complexities in our telling of the story and in the life of the church which are so elaborate and demanding that they may hide the basic truth, that Jesus is risen.

Personally and together with all Christians we have life in Him, and are called to obedience. Because of the Resurrection we can believe that Jesus Christ is God, and because we believe, we become disciples, and because we are disciples each and every one of us has a mission to make Him and His Kingdom known now and throughout our lives, in word and deed.

A church caught up by the good news of the Resurrection will be a Church that is devoted to the worship of Christ and all that he has done for us, that lives to serve those around it. It must be a holy church made up of holy people, rejecting the seeking of power, transparent about its failings, humble when there is sin.

The message we have been given by God, to give to the world is this: no-one need die, no-one need hate, all may have hope and calling, because Jesus Christ – God's chosen and anointed one - is risen from the dead.

It is a global message. It applies to those where I have been all week on the Isle of Thanet. It is good news for the harried refugees of South Sudan, the persecuted or pressurised Christians of the Middle East, whether from terrorism or state interference, the courageous Christians of so many countries. It applies to the wealthy of Manhattan and the poor of Papua New Guinea. It is good news that Christians have and that we must share, for it is news of transforming hope.

What then will we do with this man Jesus, this historic figure? What will we do with the one who died for us, and is now alive?

The resurrection confronts us with the challenge of our own decisions about Him. Do we put our lives in His hands and find life and hope, or do we seek to live our own way? There is no neutral option. We may choose to live with Him, or without Him. Choose hope and life, eternal life because it comes from God, real life because it was demonstrated decisively and forever in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. For He is risen indeed.

5 min read

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