

**A thought for Easter Day. These are based on the second Gospel for Easter Day by Father Jim**

You are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised.”  
(Matthew 28.5-6)

There is no official report of the event we celebrate today; it happened in secret, in the darkness of a stone tomb. The Gospel writers do not attempt to describe it; it is beyond the capacity of human words. Instead, the different Gospels tell us different stories about the people who were there, hinting at what they experienced and what effect it had on their lives.

Take Mary Magdalene. Despite their differences, all the Gospels agree that she was the first to see the risen Jesus. We are told that she was someone Jesus had healed, and who had become his follower as a result. Imagine the emotions she must have felt that first Easter. Delight as Jesus was welcomed by the palm-waving crowds, turning to anxiety as the threats to his safety increased, despair as he was arrested and tried, torment as she watched him die, hopelessness as she helped to bury him, grief as she returned to anoint his body. And then the amazement as she met him alive again. Jesus gave Mary a new start, twice — once when he healed her, and again when he made her the first messenger of his resurrection.

Then there was Peter. One of Jesus’ closest friends, who had let him down badly in his hour of need. Faced with the danger of arrest, Peter had been unable to cope with his fear. So he had denied knowing Jesus — as Jesus had predicted that he would. When Jesus died, his world must have fallen apart, because now he would never have the chance to say he was sorry. The resurrection gave him that chance, and with it a message of reconciliation for all people. No wrong that we can do, no denial or harsh words, no injury or insult, is beyond the reach of God’s love. A love that can conquer death can deal with any wrong that human beings can do, can neutralise and forgive it.

And Thomas, for ever known as doubting. He refused to believe that Jesus was alive again — and who can blame him? It’s such an unlikely story. But Thomas has come to stand for all who find faith difficult, who have doubts about the story of salvation. Thomas insisted on seeing and touching Jesus before he would believe. When Jesus granted his wish, he did not berate or punish him for his doubting, but accepted Thomas as he was.

What is there for us in these stories, as we gather today to experience anew the resurrection of Jesus? Perhaps some of us, like Mary, are in need of a new start. Perhaps we have become weighed down by problems, by bereavement, by illness, and we feel there is no escape. For us, then, today offers new hope. The resurrection of Jesus shows us that God’s love is stronger than any power of despair.

Or perhaps, like Peter, we bear the guilt of hurtful things said, or perhaps things unsaid, things done wrong that we can never put right. The message of the resurrection is one of forgiveness. There is no condemnation in the eyes of the risen Jesus as he looks at Peter, and at us, only love.

And perhaps we have doubts about this very unlikely and strange story we hear again today. Like Thomas, we may have moments when we long for some hard evidence. Thomas' story affirms that we are allowed that longing. We are allowed to doubt, and our doubts do not cut us off from the power of Jesus' resurrection. Whatever the state of our faith in God, God has faith in us.

To all who are in despair, to all who are caught by guilt, to all who doubt, here and in all the world, the message of the resurrection is this: God's love is stronger. If even death cannot defeat God, then anything is possible. There is always hope, there is always forgiveness, there is always a future.