

Pastoral Newsletter April 2021. Revd Sue Cooper writes:

Dear Friends,

April is always such a cheerful month, and all the more cheerful this year with the hope of further restrictions being lifted. There is more joy coming in April in the way of Holy week and Easter Sunday (4th April) and it is a time of great celebration, especially for Children as they anticipate the fun of Easter egg hunts and chocolatey treats. In the fields the little lambs are jumping around, and the celebration of new life is all around us.

New life is what Christians worldwide celebrate at Easter. But to some, it seems strange to hear that, because they can only go as far in their thinking as recalling the events of a good man named Jesus who died on a cross on Good Friday; but that is only half the story. On the first Easter Sunday a miracle took place; Jesus's body was not in the tomb where he had been laid to rest. This was strange enough, but then Jesus appeared, (alive and well) to Mary Magdalene and then to his other disciples; he had been raised to life, and this was a miracle. Our 21st century minds struggle with miracles because they cannot be understood or proved scientifically. And yet miracles and things that cannot be understood or explained do happen.

Jesus had told his disciples that he would die and would be raised to life again, and they struggled to get their heads around it. One of his friends named Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to them, and Thomas said he would not believe Jesus was alive unless he could touch his wounds. Sometime later Jesus did appear to them again, and this time Thomas was present, and he was completely dumbfounded by what he saw! And all he could do was acknowledge the reality by saying "my Lord and my God," and Jesus tells him to "stop doubting and believe." This was a new day for Jesus's disciples. They were witnesses to a miracle that would change the world.

This past year the things we have witnessed have been depressing beyond belief. Death has stalked the whole world in the form of Covid and over 126,000 people have died either of, or with Covid in the UK alone. There is nothing that can be said or done to make this better.

But out of this devastation the promise and the hope of the 1st Easter morning still shines, which is the Christian gospel message that new life is found in Jesus after we die to this world. We can know this to be true because Jesus showed us this was possible by being raised to new life again himself, and we don't need to understand every detail of this to believe that it is true. The early Church and the Christian Gospel spread very quickly because the disciples were witnesses to something so remarkable that they could not keep it to themselves, even though they did not fully understand it.

New life through Jesus is not wishful thinking or hopeful fantasy, it is the reality that awaits us, and it is for all of us. Miracles cannot be explained and this is why many folk turn their back on Jesus. Thomas couldn't make sense of what he had heard after hearing the news that Jesus was alive, and so he refused to believe, later Thomas could not explain what he was seeing when Jesus appeared to him, he could only respond with awe and amazement, and Jesus said to Thomas, what he is saying to us all, "Stop doubting and believe." A very Happy Easter to you all, and God bless you.

With love

Revd Sue