

Third Sunday of Easter
Sunday, 18th April 2021



'Risen Lord' – He Qi

Dear Friends,

Our nation prepares for the funeral of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh this coming Saturday. Our flags fly at half-mast, our church tenor bells ring muffled tolls, our Sunday worship services have been carefully crafted; and as we give thanks for Prince Philip's exemplary life of service to Queen, Country, Commonwealth and Church, our hearts are with Her Majesty as a grieving wife and mother to her broken-hearted family.

In the life of our Benefice, it has also been a week of great loss as the deaths of Dr Gordon Pack, Paul Seddon, Sybil Compton and Richard Brown have devastated the villages of Wherwell and Chilbolton. These well respected and much loved individuals have, each in their own way, exemplified similar qualities of steadfast service, selfless devotion and generosity of spirit as has Prince Philip. Our love and prayers are with each of their families: may they be strengthened and sustained by faith in the risen Christ.

In times of such sorrow, our solace and our hope is in the gift of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection has set us free from the bonds of sin. Though beset by the tragedy of our earthly frailties, we have been reconciled to God by Jesus' incomparable love, which has graced us with the assurance of life with Him. In this truth, those who die shall live in eternal joy. We are an Easter people and our song is Alleluia!

This week's timely reflection is brought to us by Alastair Barron, from his talk given on Easter Day at St Stephen's Church, Sparsholt.

Yours in the grace of our risen Lord,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

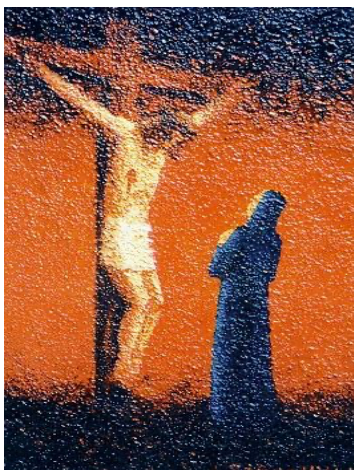
Reflection for Easter Day by Alastair Barron, Lay Worship Leader

Almighty Father, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts and hopes of all our hearts, always be acceptable in your sight. Amen.

‘He has been raised, he is not here’. Extraordinary, wonderful words in Mark’s Gospel, words that sit at the very heart of our faith and our belief in God’s promise of life after death for us all.

I wonder when was the last time you went to look for something really important, something you believed was there, only to find it wasn’t there? I’m not talking about your car keys, your wallet or even perhaps your favourite fishing rod but something vital, something from the very core of your being – imagine the feeling That’s how Mary and Mary and Salome must have felt shock, horror, loss, fear Hold those feelings in your mind for the next few minutes.

I guess we all know the Easter Story, we have worshipped on Easter Day many times. After the period of Lent in which we traditionally challenge ourselves and our faith, we’ve been remembering the events of Holy Week leading up to the narrative of Jesus’s passion. We remembered Jesus’s whole ministry being demonstrated in that single gesture when he took up the bowl and the towel at the Last Supper and washed the disciples’ feet – the example of his love, his humility being shown in an almost mundane yet hugely significant way. We remembered Judas’s betrayal and Jesus’s arrest and trial, the pain of the slips and falls as Jesus carried the heavy cross to Golgotha. We remembered the hours of excruciating agony of the crucifixion and the despair of Jesus’s Mother at her son’s violent death. All for us the most extraordinary sacrifice and gift.



‘For we hold that man is justified and made upright by faith independent of and distinctly apart from good deeds.’ (Romans 3:28) by Ladislav Záborský

I was much struck by this painting of Jesus' Mother standing at the cross that Jax included in one of her recent newsletters and so I thought I'd try and see this past week and the wonderful news of Jesus' resurrection in a slightly different way – through the eyes of 2 women, both of huge importance to Jesus – Mary his Mother and Mary Magdalene – the two Marys, if you like.

What must Jesus' mother have been thinking as she stood under her son's feet as he hung on the cross?

'The Angel told me I would have a son and that he was the Son of God and that we should call him Jesus. My faith in God had always been strong but I/we didn't really know what that meant – how could we have? We didn't really even understand how I could have a baby then but the Angel spoke to Joseph and he knew it was God's will.

Mostly Jesus seemed like a normal boy – sometimes he was good, sometimes he wasn't, sometimes he cried and sometimes he laughed. He was mostly a happy child, almost serene sometimes, He played well with the other children in the family. We loved him as parents do but in our hearts we always knew he was from God and was meant for something special.

Occasionally, we were reminded of that. I remember one time when Jesus was 12 and we had been staying in Jerusalem for Passover and then travelled home. At the end of the first day's journey, we couldn't find him and so we went back to Jerusalem and searched and searched. We found him after searching for 3 days - in the synagogue, little rascal, we were worried sick. He was fine - just sitting, listening, talking, teaching. They were amazed at his understanding and what he said to them. He asked us why we were surprised at finding him there 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' he said. I remember a feeling of wonder that Jesus was my son and yet quite clearly also God's son.



'Jesus Found in the Temple' by James Tissot

That's why I told the servants to do his bidding at the wedding when the wine ran out. Great jars of water suddenly became wine – I knew he could do it, only him and it was the best wine. I did not know it would end as it did. As I stood under him for hours as he suffered the agonies of death on the cross, feeling totally alone yet with the others, I knew it was God's will and I have always had faith in that – it was God's purpose. Just a part of me, though, wished it could have been someone else.

Jesus, my son, God's son, died on the cross at about 3.00 in the afternoon on the day before the Sabbath. He cried out to God and there was darkness all around. One of the soldiers there, a centurion I think, saw and heard what happened and, in that moment, recognised Jesus for who he was, 'Truly', he said 'this man was God's Son'. I cried.'

I think perhaps Mary Magdalene's view of things would have been different:

'I knew who Jesus was right from when I met him. He cast out 7 demons from me and I was healed. He was with his 12 disciples telling everyone about God, the good news of his love for us. There were other women with us and some of them had been cured as well. Anyway, we cared for them and for Jesus. It was a great time to be with him, to be helping him, even in a small way. I knew he was our lord.

I travelled with them and heard Jesus speak many times. We went all around Galilee. He told the disciples, he told those of us who were with him, he told the people he met and who gathered to listen – he told everyone about God, about the good news of his kingdom and he healed others, every disease and sickness.

That's why I poured perfume on him when Jesus was in Bethany. I poured perfume on his head and bathed his feet with my tears and then dried them with my hair. I just wanted to show him I loved him. I was with the others at the cross, I sat at its foot and I saw him die, I felt him die. He died even though he was God's son – I didn't really understand if I'm honest except to know it must have been God's will, God's plan. I was heartbroken – how could have God wanted his son to die?



'The Ointment of the Magdalene' by James Tissot

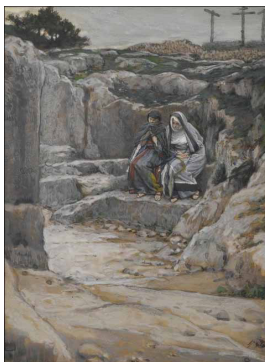
Joseph from Arimathea took Jesus in the evening and laid Jesus in his own tomb and that is where I went with Mary, on the day after the Sabbath, to see that everything was all right and to take some spices and ointments we had prepared to anoint him and that's when we discovered he was gone. Nothing, just the bandages he had been wrapped in - I was terrified someone had taken him and we didn't know who or where. There was a young man there though, in white, all shiny, and he told us that Jesus had been raised and that we would see him again in Galilee. He had been raised – I was so full of wonder at God's works!

I did see Jesus again, you know – before Galilee. He came to me near the tomb. I thought he was the gardener who spoke to me but then I saw it was him. I went and told Peter and the disciples, 'Jesus is risen, I have seen him' I told them. I was so happy.'

Two different views of things – but some common ground. Their different yet constant awareness that Jesus was her son but also God's son, the joy of Mary Magdalene in her clear understanding of who Jesus was and of his love for her. The suffering of that last week and the agonies of Jesus's death - a week of betrayal, pain and suffering ending in the glory of the risen Lord. The bandages of the tomb left behind, angels sitting waiting to tell the good news of Jesus's raising from the dead all these things leading to the extraordinary joy of the hope given to us all through Jesus being raised from the dead and so defeating death all so we might live our lives today, in beautiful rural Hampshire, full of faith in God's promise of eternal life.

The resurrection of Jesus happened 2000 years ago, our faith in God's victory over death is here, now, every day, with each of us. **'He has been raised, he is not here'** the angel said – what extraordinary, wonderful news that is!!

***Almighty Father, we thank you for your son, Jesus Christ – for his life, his ministry and his sacrifice for us. Lift us through your grace and the living breath of the Holy Spirit to lives filled with your hope, the hope of life eternal.
Amen.***



'The Two Marys Watch the Tomb of Jesus' by James Tissot

Service Schedule

Having had the joy of being able to open our churches for in-person services for Easter Sunday, we are now planning to start holding services on a regular basis. We intend initially to hold two services per week, one of Holy Communion and one of Morning Worship, at 10am on Sunday morning, across the Benefice and alternate the Churches where these services will be held as below. Our website www.downsbenefice.org also has the most up-to-date service and other information and is updated daily.

Until the Government lifts the various Coronavirus restrictions, we will be following the proscribed 'Road Map' and will continue to ask everyone attending to book their seats in advance via the Benefice Office (01962 880 845 / office@downsbenefice.org.uk) ; maintain social distancing and wear masks.

Our services for the rest of this month will be:

Sunday	18 th April	10am	Crawley	Morning Worship
Sunday	18 th April	10am	Wherwell	Holy Communion
Sunday	25 th April	10am	Chilbolton	Morning Worship
Sunday	25 th April	10am	Littleton	Holy Communion

Collect for The Third Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord:
 give us such knowledge of his presence with us,
 that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life
 and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
 through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Luke 24:36-48 - Jesus Appears to His Disciples

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'



A Prayer on the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

God of our lives,
we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip,
for his love of our country,
and for his devotion to duty.
We entrust him now to your love and mercy,
through our Redeemer Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Links to Official Digital Books of Condolence for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

Buckingham Palace website: www.royal.uk
Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/remembering-his-royal-highness-prince-philip>