

**Easter Day
Sunday, 4th April 2021**



Dear Friends,

'Mary Magdalene announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"'
(John 20: 18)

This week, we have begun to see light at the end of a very dark tunnel. Lockdown regulations are relaxing, and people are finally able to meet with each other, albeit still in limited ways. It has been a great joy to have met with many of you on Good Friday, for outdoor services in glorious sunshine at Crawley and Chilbolton. For though our solemn observances made us confront the darkest day the world has known, we also saw glimmers of hope – in two year old, Edward, as he shyly added his bright yellow pansies to the Easter Garden at St Mary's, Crawley; and in the words of the tramp captured by Gavin Bryars' haunting Symphony, *'Jesus' blood never failed me yet,* which punctuated our Meditations at St Mary's, Chilbolton.



Source - Instagram

Her Majesty was quick to be among her people again. Though diminutive in stature, her powerful presence at the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede on Wednesday, where she commemorated the lives of Royal Australian Air Force personnel who have lost their lives in service to their country, gave the nation a joyful burst of her fragrant and graceful light; her hat gently yet defiantly offering us all a foretaste of the joy of Easter.

In scripture, we read how another diminutive figure; that of Mary Magdalene, brought her own light and grace to the sombre scene at Jesus' tomb on that first Easter morning. Coming in love and faith, with no thought for her own safety to anoint her beloved friend's dead body, she had no idea that she was witnessing the resurrection Jesus had promised would happen. Hers is the foretaste of Easter for which the world rightly rejoices today! Given all we have journeyed through this past year, we need the good news of Jesus in our hearts just as ever those first disciples did. This Easter Day, may we sing ***'We are an Easter people and our song is Alleluia!'*** with true conviction.



'Noli Me Tangere' by Titian

John's Gospel account of this momentous event sets first Mary, and then John himself and Peter, as credible eye-witnesses. The details of the way they found the open tomb, how they saw the linen in which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had so carefully wrapped Jesus only days before now lying discarded – as if His body had simply evaporated through them.

John describes how, when he saw the empty tomb, he believed what had happened. Peter left the scene still unsure as to what he had just observed. What could it all mean? We are told how the two men, probably still terrified for their own lives in those terrible days after Jesus' crucifixion, went back to the safety of their lodgings. Only Mary remained, and was blessed with being the first to meet with the risen Lord as a consequence. First though, we are given the remarkable tableau of her meeting with two angels, who themselves knowing what has happened, seem incredulous that she might feel the need to weep! 'Why?' they ask. The world has been redeemed. Jesus has risen from the dead – and the only tears the angels can perceive might be necessary are tears of ecstasy and joy!



'Hallelujah' by Mike Moyers

Over the past year, I am glad these newsletters, the bible reflections and the artwork they contain have helped you feel connected as we have traversed the ravages of Coronavirus together. I am equally grateful to my Ministry colleagues for their support in written word, video services and wider outreach to folks of all ages. Whatever we have experienced thus far, and whatever we are yet to face, both as individuals and as a community, have faith in the resurrected presence of Jesus Christ! You don't even have to take my word for it – we have the first-hand witness of Mary Magdalene, and of Peter and John and the other disciples - who, though they might have needed more convincing along the way, have also testified to meeting Jesus, resurrected and eternal.

May you know the peace of the risen Christ this Easter!

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for Easter Day

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.
Amen.



John 20: 1-18 - The Resurrection of Jesus

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me,

because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord;' and she told them that he had said these things to her.