

## Isaiah 52:7-end Luke 24:1-12

Today is a day of celebration. It is a day when we remember that Jesus was raised to life from the grave. The resurrection is a precious and essential part of Christian belief because, without it, we are here as people who, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, are to be more pitied than anyone else. The Resurrection changes everything because it is the moment that puts a seal of excellence on the life and works of Jesus but also gives us hope for the future.

It's funny though looking at the gospel accounts running up to the sightings of Jesus. There is a sense of heaviness and sadness. Despite everything that Jesus had told his followers running up to the cross, there was no faith that the tomb was not the end. I can't blame them for that. They'd got the wrong end of the stick and the events of Jesus' arrest and execution were so swift and brutal that shock was inevitable. There is also fear. Would they be the next ones to be arrested and tried? And so we see the eleven remaining disciples in hiding and the women creeping out early in the morning to finish preparing the body – the practicalities of how to get the stone out of the way hadn't even come to mind.

Imagine you are one of the women as you enter into the garden and find the stone rolled away. What goes through your mind? Don't believe the conspiracy theories that they somehow went to the wrong tomb. John is clear in his gospel that the tomb was very close to the cross, in a garden and was new and never used. The women were in the right place! Now what goes through your mind as you enter the tomb and see nothing but the empty strips of linen? Panic? Fear? Disbelieve? Sorrow?

But all of those emotions go out of the window when suddenly two angels speak to them and remind them of what Jesus had said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' ". This is the ultimate in good news. "He is not here, he has risen!"

Without those words and without the risen Jesus being seen alive, then the whole of the Gospel's unravel. The whole message of Jesus relies on the fact that he died and rose again. No resurrection, then Jesus is just another man who did amazing things but not the one who can bring hope to a hurting world. But with Jesus rising again, a new hope dawns for mankind.

It's into this that Isaiah speaks and prophesies. In a hint of what we are told in chapter 53, the image of Jesus disfigured and broken is imagined but we are told it is for a reason "he will sprinkle many nations." It may sound an odd thing to say but this is priestly imagery. In the temple, the blood from a sacrifice was sprinkled around as a show and sign of cleansing from wrong, atoning from wrong, making holy that which is not. The servant in Isaiah is the one who forms the sacrifice. But death does not hold this servant – "he will be raised and lifted up and exalted." It's not hard to see the resonance with the resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven.

This is good news!

“How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”  
Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;  
together they shout for joy.”

The reaction of the women to hearing the news of the resurrection was to rush and share the news. They were the first to proclaim the joy of God’s peace with others. And so, as slowly the apostles realised the truth so they went and shared these good tidings with others and proclaimed salvation.

You know, if this really is truth, then it is truth worth shouting from the rooftops. This is the news that the world needs to hear and what greater honour and privilege can there be than to be people who bring good news in word and deed – beautiful are the feet are those who do so.

So this Easter, don’t keep the news to yourself. This is news and faith worth sharing. With the risen Jesus, so hope dawned into the world. Alleluia, Christ is Risen!