

Easter Day Sermon 2020.

We talk about the valley of death and the mountain top experience..two extremes of human experience from the depths to the heights.

The self-isolation imposed on us at this time has led to some imaginative and inventive ways to keep spirits high – from Russian ballet dancers doing their routines in a domestic setting. To families setting familiar tunes to clever lyrics about the coronavirus outbreak

But you might also find, that away from the daily pressures of ordinary life, deeper, darker thoughts make themselves felt. Having stepped off of the treadmill of work and everyday living, we find these thoughts bubbling up. And the seclusion we have to endure may become very hard to bear.

We face a constant stream of bad news..including that of Good Friday on which nearly 1,000 new death in the UK from Covic-19 were announced.

The highs and lows of life, the good times and the difficult, are part of the wonder and mystery of our human existence, part of what drives us to seek to explore meaning and purpose for living. In this time of lock-down we find the space and time to ponder on these things..these real questions about purpose and destiny.. What am I here for? What really matters in life? What will I do with this one, precious, life I have been given?

The Easter story of Jesus death and resurrection speaks directly into this search for meaning and purpose. On the cross, Jesus takes on all the pain and suffering and sorrow that the whole world has to endure. In the face of death he says Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.

All seems lost and defeated, as cross and nails and a spear in his side do their worst.

The women who had followed Jesus had seen the tomb where his body had been laid and went and prepared spices and ointments to embalm his dead body.

And then in the darkness and depths of Jesus death itself a mystery of a new creation is worked out. God's love for the whole world, defeats the powers of sin and death. For when these women come back, after the Sabbath, they find an empty tomb.

The last Chapters of the Gospels seeks to explain something of the mystery of Jesus' resurrection – there are strange and wonderful accounts .. Of disciples on the road to Emmaus meeting a stranger who they recognise as Jesus only at the breaking of the bread; at which point, just as the penny drops, he is taken away from them.

Or else in the upper room when the disciples think they are seeing a ghost, Jesus draws their attention to the marks of the nails he still bears, and the message of a suffering Messiah that they can find in the psalms and the OT prophets.

Signs of the repentance, the turning to God, and the forgiveness that lie at the heart of the good news they are to proclaim. "You are witnesses of these things" he tells them.

Last Easter, on Sabbatical, I was looking after the English Church in Zermatt, Switzerland. I made a Calvary and an Easter Garden in the Churchyard which was covered in snow at the end of April, (See the pictures on our parish website) by Easter Monday the snow had melted but the Calvary and Easter Garden remained as points to turn to as signs of God's mercy, grace and love.

In these times, we too can turn to these enduring signs of God's love for us  
In repentance, turning to God with the pain that has been inflicted upon us, the disappointments, the distress, the darkness of life we bear at this time

...or

turning to God for forgiveness for the pain we have inflicted on others, the short-fallings and disappointments for which we are responsible. This is what the Gospel of the Good news of God in Jesus is all about.. and we see it in his death and resurrection.

All of these sorrows, these short-fallings ..the sinfulness that mars our existence have been put to death with Jesus on the cross.

As he rises the first all fruits of a new creation ..so we can rise with a fresh start and new beginning knowing his power to work in our lives a miracle of dealing with that seems lost and defeated in us.

Alleluia Christ is Risen..He is risen indeed. Alleluia!