

An Easter Reflection;

Back ground Reading; Acts 10; 34-43; Peter challenges the prevailing society by witnessing to the truths of Christ's life, death and resurrection.

Jeremiah 31; 1-6 A brief summary of Salvation history that leads from the wilderness to grace, reaffirms God's faithfulness and inspires a hope filled response.

Ecclesiastes chapter 3 in particular verse 5.

Colossians 3; 1-4 In Baptism, Paul reminds us, we already share in Christ's risen presence, God's redemptive pattern for transforming our lives.

Acts 10; 34-43, Matthew 28 1-10. John. 20 verses 1-18 Accounts of Resurrection

SERMON FOR EASTER DAY;

The Lord is Risen, He is Risen indeed!

Eddie James "Son" House Jr., was one of the fathers of the Mississippi Delta Blues. If you get a chance please do listen to his wonderful song "John the Revelator". It is a song that is sung beautifully and unaccompanied, which in three four-line verses encapsulates the essence of salvation history. It opens with God walking in the Garden of Eden, calling Adam who refuses to answer "because he is naked and ashamed". In verse two, Jesus takes three disciples aside, requesting them to watch and wait whilst he prays. As you know the disciples fall asleep. Finally, on Resurrection morning we hear how Mary is sent as the First evangelist.

The chorus describes St. John writing in the book of Revelation "The Book of the Seven Seals" and so this song very skilfully takes us from Genesis to Revelation in under three minutes.

In John's resurrection account Jesus asks Mary Magdalene "Not to touch him". We are also reminded by the writer of Ecclesiastes in Chapter 3, verse 5; "there is a time to refrain from embracing".

The two quotes above, one for the Old Testament and one from the New surely could have been written for such a time as we are experiencing now.

Of course, Mary would have wanted to embrace Jesus; of course, we want to embrace each other.

Mary is asked by Jesus not to hold on to him, because He has not yet ascended to the Father. I suspect she was as puzzled as we are in being denied physical touch.

There has been a lot theology around the concept of "Presence in Absence" and maybe we would do well to reflect upon the absence we feel in grief; for we often seem to embody something of the one we love and carry them with us always. Is there not a sense, paradoxically, in deep pain when we learn to "Know someone in a different way".

As Christians, we are also experiencing a grief around the concept of receiving Holy Communion. Not being able to physically share in the Bread and Wine together is a painful challenge.

I think that we can surely draw strength from John 15, when Jesus talks about living in the Vine. "Abide in me, as I abide in You". (John 15 v 4). Here Jesus is reminding us that he lives deep deep within us.

So, Christ is far greater than the physical institution of Church or any Church building.

Can we now embrace, I wonder, that Christ is greater still than a physical embrace?

Now that undeniably is a great but necessary challenge for the times we live in right now.

He has promised us "I will be with you to the end of the age" (Matthew 28 v20). Literally "Forever".

This Easter we have a unique challenge to draw strength from the Christ who is closer always than the very breath we breath for he lives within us.

We have a second Scripture in the beauty and wonder of creation the whole of nature is Gods Cathedral and in our daily walks we need to drink deeply of that well. Along with this short sermon I have attached a poem called "An Easter Tree". This tree is situated in a front garden in Colneis Road. It is so beautiful and for me it is a sacred sign at this time. If you are able to go out for a walk as part of your permitted daily exercise, see if you can spot it.

Finally, I return to where we began, with the wonderful music of Eddie James "Son" House Jr., and his distinctive side guitar style. In the final verse he returns to the Fall and why the physical dying of and rising of Christ were necessary. Jesus physically leaves earth to make way for the Holy Spirit to come in great power at Pentecost.

A Prayer.

God you are Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer; Father, Son and Spirit.

May we ever sing your praise and seek to do your will.

For you abide in us and we abide in you and together we ever abide in the Vine of your love.

We pray this day for all who suffer in body mind and spirit.

We pray for our loved ones and neighbours near and far.

We take time to confess our sins and seek forgiveness.

Teach as we pray, new ways to live in you and help us always to remember that you will never leave us or forsake us.

Amen

The Lord is Risen, He is Risen indeed!