

Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

'We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Mark 16:1-8

Jesus has risen

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?'

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell

his disciples and Peter, “He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Reflection

Happy Easter! Or maybe as this is being emailed on Thursday you're reading it on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday? Because, of course, Easter Sunday forms part of a season in the churches years that begins on Ash Wednesday, continues through Lent, into Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and beyond Easter Sunday to Ascension and Pentecost.

Easter Sunday marks the most important event in human history, the day that Jesus rose from the dead, defeated sin and death and began the renewal of creation that will one day be complete; but Easter Sunday is part of God's larger story, and that larger story gives context to Easter Sunday as much as Easter Sunday is the pinnacle of that story.

It is when we know and appreciate the story of God, his people and creation that we realise that need for God to step in to save, to heal, to reconcile, to ransom each and every one of us and all creation. It's them that we comprehend the greatness of his love, and mercy and forgiveness. To put in in the context of the narrative, there is no joy of Easter Sunday without the loss and emptiness of Holy Saturday, or the sadness and grief of Good Friday, or the parting or the betrayal of Maundy Thursday. There is no second crowd shouting “Crucify him!”, without the first crowd shouting “Hosanna!”, no ministry without temptation, no Christmas without the Fall.

Similarly, as we reflect on our New Testament reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we realise that Easter Sunday might be a crescendo in the symphony of God's story but it is not the end. Rather (to continue the musical analogy) it is a crescendo that leads to a new movement, a movement of joy and expectation, of freedom and forgiveness. A movement that sees Jesus followers continuing his mission to bring the good news of salvation to all the earth and continue to see his kingdom breakthrough in acts of renewal, in healings, prophecies, social justice, care for creation and much, much more.

So, Happy Easter! Why don't you take a moment to reflect on where you connect with God's story today? You may have been journeying through Lent and Holy Week and be prepared to welcome Easter Sunday with joy, but where is the

resurrection power of Jesus going to call you to next? What part of his mission are you called to engage with? How will you see his kingdom come and the renewal of creation? How does the good news of Easter speak to a community, a nation and a world emerging from the death and isolation of COVID? How might we better protect God's creation and hasten its renewal rather than its destruction?

Finally, to those of us who do not feel that Easter has come in our lives yet, I want to remind you that Jesus is the God of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday too, he is with you, and Sunday *will* come, hallelujah!

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