

Easter Sunday

Podcast Script
12 April 202

Introduction & Notices



It is Easter Day. Welcome this podcast from New Kilpatrick Parish Church in Bearsden. It is a delight to share this day of all days with you, even though we are unable to say to each other face to face: Alleluia!, that day will come and it is our intention, on the first day we can gather safely as a congregation, we will have Easter: our own resurrection of sorts as we leave the tomb-like way we necessarily have to live at the moment and celebrate being in the presence of others.

Jeanette leads our time today with myself sharing so please come with us as we meet at the tomb, the tomb where the stone has rolled, the tomb that is empty and where we are left with only questions. John's version of that moment is our invitation today and it is read by all the ministers of the town together.

Reading: John 20:1-18

Welcome

Maybe we are here out of curiosity. Maybe we are here out of love and hope and questions about what today means. Maybe we are just here. To find something. In recognition that the darkness which prevailed has now given way to light. Absence is presence. The tomb is empty.

And maybe it is enough to sit by the open tomb. Away from the darkness of death and suffering and isolation. And that is all we do today. For Mary Magdalene, it was weeping at the entrance of the tomb, for Peter or the other disciple they returned home at a loss to what they had discovered. We are all different in how we react to an experience. But for each one of us as we try to grasp what this event, what resurrection means considering the isolation, fear, anxiety, grief and suffering that we are all part of, and maybe this Easter Sunday is the beginning of something new.

Holy week has passed. The crucifixion and death of Jesus has passed. We have waited through the darkness and unknowing of Easter Saturday and now we arrive at the empty tomb.

Today should have a different feel to it. A chance to show that the old has gone and the new has begun. And yet, it seems as if we are still in the tomb, the darkness is there, and the light hasn't quite been able to shine through enough.

Maybe that is how we see today. The nearly but not quite yet. So, what can we do? What should we do? There are no services. There are no Easter Communion sacraments. There are no eggs rolling down the hills in all their painted glory. There is just a silence. But perhaps that is how it should be when we are all facing the same situation the world over.

Prayer

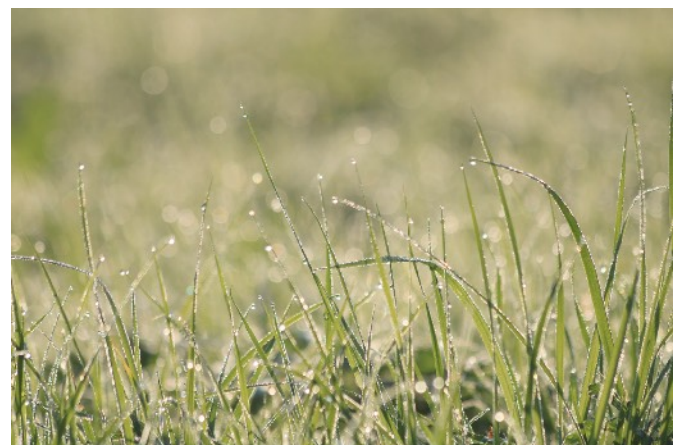
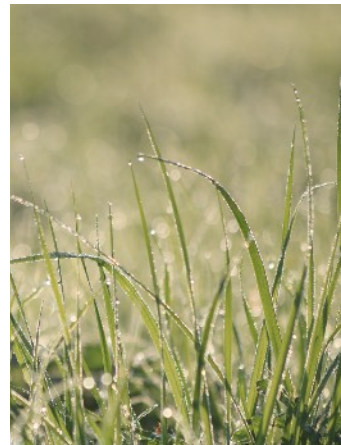
Early morning God,
we need to invent words today
to speak into this story of resurrection,
for we still wait
in our own isolation,
the stone not yet rolled for us.

Yet,
may we hear this story of resurrection, O God,
as our hope for the future,
a vision in this time,
a dream when we can walk free
of all that now binds us.

May this story of resurrection, O God,
be a longing we live towards,
that we might one day soon,
meet each other,
new to life and fresh as the morning;

a world set free,
where fear is gone,
and we can care
in the embrace of each other,
and feel how valuable that is,
and appreciate so much more
the Good News,
the possibility of that first Easter day.

This is our longing,
this is our future,
this is our tomorrow,
and today we celebrate its promise
of new life,
a resurrection for us all,
in all our communities.



Early morning God,
good morning,
and alleluia!

Amen

I danced in the morning

(Sydney Carter)

*I danced in the morning
When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem
I had my birth.*



It was a strange week. There was so much going on in Jerusalem with the Passover and everyone arriving in the city. You couldn't move for people. They were everywhere. So much had happened already this week. We had not long since arrived ourselves – only a few days ago – and what an arrival it was. Jesus welcomed with open arms.

But there was a sadness. A sadness in his eyes and he kept speaking of leaving us behind. If only we had understood what he meant. If only we had listened more. If only.

*I danced for the scribe
And the pharisee,
But they would not dance
And they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen,
For James and John
They came with me
And the Dance went on.*

We gathered in an upstairs room to eat together. The bread and wine ready on the table. Everything was prepared. Ready. Waiting. Jesus had a kind of weight-of-the-world weariness about him. But even with all the talk of him going away, he was fully present, and his love had arms that held us close. Still, a sadness lingered in his eyes. It reminded me of the book of Isaiah where we have the words, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

*I danced on the Sabbath
And I cured the lame;
The holy people
Said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
And they hung me on high,*

*And they left me there
On a Cross to die.*

Then Jesus did something. Something so unimaginable it is hard to write it down in words. Unless you were there, you probably wouldn't believe it. He got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

And after getting a basin of water, he told us to give him our feet. To give our feet to him, Jesus. He wanted to wash our feet. The lowest of the low, the work of a servant. And yet here he was. Looking to wash our feet. Explaining what it meant.

He said, 'You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

Soon Judas left the room. We went to the garden of Gethsemane; Jesus prayed and grieved. We slept, not knowing what was to happen. Arrested. Falsely accused. Questioned. Crucified. Death.

*I danced on a Friday
When the sky turned black
It's hard to dance
With the devil on your back.
They buried my body
And they thought I'd gone,
But I am the Dance,
And I still go on.*



"It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

*They cut me down
And I leapt up high;
I am the life
That'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
If you'll live in me -
I am the Lord
Of the Dance, said he.*



This is not the end. This is the beginning. A new beginning. Mary Magdalene, weeping in the garden. Jesus asked why this was so. In pain and grief, she did not yet recognise. 'Rabbouni!'

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

Sermonette

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, who spent time in German prison camps during the second world war wrote this poem as a prayer for his fellow-prisoners.

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.
Help me to pray
And to concentrate my thoughts on you;
I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness,
But with you there is light;
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;

I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;
I am restless, but with you there is peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;
I do not understand your ways,
But you know the way for me.

O Heavenly Father,
I praise and thank you
For rest in the night;
I praise and thank you for this new day;
I praise and thank you for all your goodness
and faithfulness throughout my life.

You have granted me many blessings;
Now let me also accept what is hard from your hand.
You will lay on me no more than I can bear.
You make all things work together for good for your children.

Lord Jesus Christ,
You were poor and in distress, a captive and forsaken as I am.

You know all man's troubles;
You abide with me when all men fail me;
You remember and seek me;



It is your will that I should know you and turn to you.
Lord, I hear your call and follow;
Help me.

O Holy Spirit,
Give me faith that will protect me
from despair, from passions, and from vice;
Give me such love for God and men
as will blot out all hatred and bitterness;
Give me the hope that will deliver me
from fear and faint-heartedness. Amen.

This Easter Sunday is different from any most of us have ever encountered before. We are three weeks into what may be the first of many lockdown weeks still to come. We are isolated and fearful of the present and the future. Bonhoeffer, in this prayer, and his many letters written from prison, were written from that place of isolation, with nothing, no understanding of what might happen, or if he would survive. He didn't. Seventy-five years ago, on Maundy Thursday just passed, on the 9th April 1945, Bonhoeffer was executed in a Nazi prison camp after being part of a plot to kill Hitler. When in prison he used his time to think beyond, and into, the realm of what was ultimate meaning and who was God. He recognised the place we are all in but also recognised that God was still there with him at that time. Not to change his situation, but to just be with him in his suffering and need.

Just like Bonhoeffer, we are all probably questioning life just now. Although there are many good news stories emerging from around the world, most of the news is statistics and figures of illness, death, and families torn apart through grief. Our perspective on life and living is possibly changing. The things we took for granted and without any conscious thought are now the things we miss the most. The opportunity to go where we want, with who we want, and when we want has gone. Having family and friends visit us at home or vice versa has gone. We are disconnected from the physical contact of life to an online digital connection. But that reconnection only works for those with the appropriate equipment and ability to do so. Not everyone has this option at their disposal.

The isolation from others, the lack of physical contact, even if it just the touch of another's hand is taking its toll. Over thousands and thousands of years, humanity has evolved into social creatures. This is new territory and given the choice, not one that we would readily accept. But at the moment we have to believe what we are being told, we have to trust that those making difficult decisions on our behalf are doing them for the correct reason and making the right decisions. I, for one, would not like to be in their position - ever. Blame will be attributed to one or all. And that is not the way to start afresh.

But there is a resurrection of hope that the future will change for the better. That decisions made now will impact people long after this is over. The realisation that all people deserve a better standard of living and to be treated with respect, dignity, and compassion. It is changing the rule book and the future. Society will be resurrected in a new way, shaped by a unified sense of compassion and love. Jesus' teachings finally coming home.

However, Jurgen Moltmann said, “believing in the resurrection does not just mean assenting to a dogma and noting a historical fact... Resurrection is not a consoling opium, soothing us with the promise of a better world in the hereafter. It is the energy for a rebirth of this world. It is focused on the redemption of this one... Christian hope does not promise successful days to the rich and the strong, but resurrection and life to those who must exist in the shadows of death.”

This is where we find ourselves, existing in the shadows of death be that literally, after the death of loved ones, or metaphorically by living with the unknown. We are in a period of great suffering. The events we are experiencing are bringing pain and grieving and fear and anxiousness. Nobody is immune. Everyone will be affected somehow. But out of it should come a change in living, a change in how we interact with each other. In how we look out for neighbour irrespective of who they are, whatever their background, whatever their circumstance. The realisation that prisoners are humans and should also be treated as such.

We will emerge from this, from our own metaphorical tomb, not as social butterflies set to go back into the world as we were and how we lived but resurrected, transformed and shaped into a new person, a new identity. And it is only then, when that happens, that we will fully understand what resurrection means.

Bonhoeffer said, “Good Friday and Easter free us to think about other things far beyond our own personal fate, about the ultimate meaning of all life, suffering, and events: and we lay hold of a great hope.” Amen.

Song

O Love, that wilt not let me go by Westminster Chorus

Epilogue

Let us unloose the alleluias!
Let us open our doors,
our gates,
our windows,
unlock the lockdown,
and set the alleluias free.

Let them fly like children’s kites
high above our quite streets,
multicoloured balloons
over the empty parks,
rainbow pictures
filling every window;

let us unlock the alleluias,
for even if we must not yet leave our quiet tombs,



at least let us set free hope
that this tomb-like time is temporary:
it is what we must do
before the life comes back.

So let the alleluias sing together
where we cannot yet do so;
let the alleluias gather
where silence lingers;
let the alleluias commit 'social converging'
in daring and colourful ways,
that while we cannot escape our isolation
we are preparing for the time
when our own kind of resurrection comes
a time when
we gather together,
and feast,
and sing,
and laugh,
and roll eggs,
and share stories,
and meet each other's eyes again
and celebrate,
the life we are promised,
today.



Blessing

May we find resurrection
in the song of birds and the chorus of dawn;
in the bowing of the mountains and the clapping of the trees;
in the flow of the air and the lightening of the horizon;
and in such places know the promise of the one who rises again.
And the grace of the Risen Lord,
the love of the Early Morning God
and the common life of the Dancing Spirit
be with us all
evermore
Amen

Announcements

Thank you for letting us join you in your home and hopefully we might be invited back next week when we continue to tell the resurrection story among us.

The church website (nkchurch.org.uk) is continually being updated with ways to keep connected, art, poems, online events and you can subscribe to our bulletin and the rainbow room project, creating a rainbow in whatever way you wish, take a photo and send the photo to the church email or instagram @nkchurch #nkeaster. There are other local and a new overseas project to get involved with along with all our news.

Music today was Lord of the Dance was by Music Guitar; O love that wilt not let me go by Westminster Chorus and Bambalela which we will play in a moment was arranged by Marty Haugen.

Keep safe, keep well, keep isolating. Tak' Tent.

Song

Bambelela

