

He is risen! The hope for the world

We long for good news. You may watch the news update avidly hoping for some real news of positive change. We are so grateful for all the good things going on; as people help, care, and research ways to eliminate or vaccinate against the virus, but we are longing for a real breakthrough in circumstances.

We long to see good news of less infections, less death, lots of resources for those on the front line of caring. We long for more hope.

But we are aware of how life has changed so dramatically and it seems to have happened so fast - in a matter of weeks our normal patterns of living have changed. We have 'a new normal'. We hope it won't be like this for too long.

Some things can happen to us that are dramatically life affecting. Some things mess up our lives, shatter our sense of peace, of normality, of joy; of what the future may be like.

We think of a time two thousand years ago – of a life changing event. And it seems like all was bad news. Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ breathed *his last breath on that cross*. For his friends and followers everything changed - and it seemed for the worse. If Jesus was gone what else was there left to hope in?

Yet those followers should have known death hasn't got the last word. Jesus had told them, and the Old Testament had predicted, that Christ would come back from the dead, bodily. He came to conquer death.

See what one of the Gospels says as some of those followers first encounter that great truth; from Mark's Gospel chapter 16:

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. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"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. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

These women were initially troubled and scared as they processed this news. Life was different again. This was bewildering and confusing... but not bad news. Strange but hopeful. Good news...

When we read the other Gospels and other parts of the bible, we see what then happens. They realise Jesus *is* alive. The followers of Jesus meet with him and everything is wonderfully changed. From shattered, grieving, despairing, hopeless people they become triumphant with hope because they know love wins and life, not death, speaks loudest - because Jesus is alive

Now see what the angel says to the women. *'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.'*

But go, tell his disciples and Peter. The angel singles out Peter. Why not just say 'Tell the disciples'? After all Peter was one of the disciples. The last we hear of Peter is of a broken man, despairing and distraught at denying his Friend and Lord. It as though the emphasis is 'Make sure Peter knows Jesus is alive- he *really* needs to know this'.

Peter needed to know. So, do I. So, do you. Jesus lives- never to die again. He guarantees a wonderful future when we belong to Him. Death is not the final word; the worst life can offer will not have the final say.

The Easter Day hope is for all. We are to be an Easter people always. The disciples needed to know it. When they did life changed wonderfully for them.

Peter got to know and was transformed. And you and I are to know it.

'Go tell his disciples and...' put you own name there. I hope you know, really know Jesus lives now. Then put someone else's name there: a friend, neighbour, family member. They need to know it too. Pray for them, and tell them this news.

He is risen! Life feels all over the place; perhaps you feel it can be never quite the same. Perhaps you are scared about what the future holds, about what is around the corner. But in all this, hold onto the deep hope that will strengthen you: God will never let the death win out. God is love and, in His Son, gives true lasting life.

May that Easter joy transform your days to come.

Jesus is alive now - in that is the hope for all of us.

AMEN