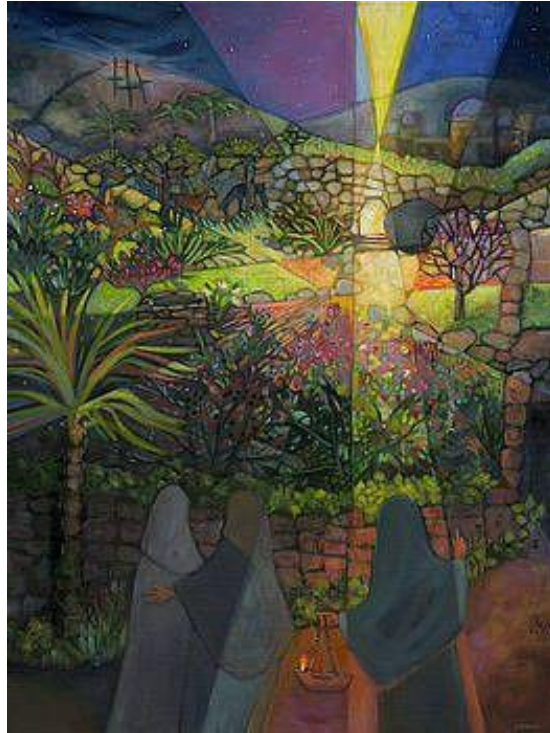


A brighter dawn, a deeper truth



We meet in the dark tonight, because let's be honest, often that's where we find ourself standing, one way or other. And I love that our faith meets us there. In the dark as we stumble And proclaims

Alleluia! Christ is Risen...! (He is risen indeed, alleluia!)

From the darkness shines a new light. Just as, at Christmas, from the darkness of the womb came new life, so now, at Easter, from the darkness of the tomb comes resurrection.

We do not need to know the answers, or to shine with any particular virtuous life. We just need to hang in there. To show up, like those women, weeping at the tomb. To be willing to stand in the darkness and cry out.

Christianity is a materialist religion. We believe in the power of Jesus to reach in and touch. Just as at Christmas he

joined himself to us in human flesh, so now at Easter we are joined to his risen body. And, Jesus says, I will – if necessary – drag all things to myself. It's pretty physical – it's pretty visceral, really.

The Stations of the Cross in this Church are pretty visceral—portraying all the blood and sweat of the suffering and death of Jesus. But they do remind us of the physicality of the Passion. They stop us making it an idea of the heart, and remind us that this was Real Sweat, Real Blood – real struggle.

Which means we can really join it to the blood, sweat and tears of our own existence. We don't have to separate out our lives into 'Church-worthy' / 'God-worthy' and... the rest of it. Jesus shows us clearly that he will come striding down the dusty streets of our hearts, that he will mingle bodily fluids with us, that he will join us in the cold darkness of the tombs where we meet our dead ends and our immobility, our secret shames, and our places of unknowing.

But... one day we will have to buy the icons of the resurrection that complete this series. Because if we truly celebrate Easter, we have to accept that the Resurrection is even more real than the Cross. That Jesus meets us in the Cross *so he can take us through*. That we are a Resurrection people, with a Resurrection faith. That just as we identified with the brokenness of things in the Crucifixion, so we are called to own and walk the truth of the Resurrection.

That there is a deeper truth.

Jesus says – take, eat, this is my Body... do this in remembrance of me. He says wear this, walk this, become this... deep within you, my seed of life.

We are called to be sharers of his joy, embodiments of his hope, bearers of his truth. Because his truth is ours.

It is not just Jesus who dies on the cross – it is every one of us, in tears and pain and loss. He holds it for us.

It is not just Jesus whose resurrection streams light from darkness. It is for every one of us. Held by him.

We are called to walk it in the world. To share this unlikely possibility in the way we look to grace, to possibility, to hope, to life. In the way we proclaim, and live, the empty tomb.

To walk into the darkness of the world, carrying a candle-flame of hope, and proclaiming the Baptismal truth – from death, life... claimed by God.

I do feel for the women, with this enigmatic angel who's had eternity to take hold of this Truth, and has so little time for these weeping, battered human hearts to catch up.

It is a lifetime's work to take in the reality and meaning of the resurrection.

And here in this gospel, there is no comforting touchable presence of the Gardener, no voice calling their name. Sometimes, it is like that for us, too.

But ...somehow even in the face of all impossibility, these women follow their deep gut instincts. And they run off, confused and bewildered, but they share the news.

But the words seemed to those who heard, an idle tale.

And, in today's world... hope, and possibility. ... it might seem to be ... irrational, unfounded.

But ...

Sherlock Holmes once said : “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth”

It is impossible that the Lord of all Life could be defeated by Death. It is impossible to put out a candle flame by putting darkness into it – although of course a candle flame can lighten any dark place.

Love itself, that draws all things to itself, is not going to leave anyone out in the dark, but seeks and find all things, even if it must be through cross and tomb and sealed stone.

We have the option to dismiss it, to lock ourselves out in darkness, until Jesus comes in inescapable light at the end of all eternity. And sometimes we do.

Or to take heart with the women. With those who knew that from darkness and things unseen, from blood and tears and crying – new life can be born.

They knew it, as we know it, deep in our gut. Body to body. Taken, eaten, broken and shared. It’s not just an idea, a faerie tale – it’s a reality we can hold on to.

Will we stand with the women? Will we dare to stand together and look at the darkness of the world and live resurrection... to say, *take heart... he is Risen!* Even in the dark, even before we see him?

Because the darkness is real, but the light is stronger. Because death is real, but life is stronger. Because fear and pain and brokenness are real, but Jesus is stronger – and this night, as we remember our baptism, we recall that claiming for life, and we re-affirm our commitment to live it together. Every day. To look on the Cross squarely, and completely,

and to weep there, whilst at the same time, feeling on our faces the warmth of the dawn, and turning to it.

Jesus tells us he is *making all things new*. Not some things, or most things, but *all things*.

For, says S. Paul, if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ... we have been buried with him by baptism into death... so that we too might walk in newness of life.

The world may feel very broken, but there is a deeper truth.

C. S Lewis says it like this....

To be sure, it feels wintry enough still: but often in the very early spring it feels like that. Two thousand years are only a day or two by this scale. [We] really ought to say, 'The Resurrection happened two thousand years ago' in the same spirit in which he says, 'I saw a crocus yesterday.' Because we know what is coming behind the crocus.

The spring comes slowly down this way; but the great thing is that the corner has been turned.

There is, of course, this difference, that in the natural spring the crocus cannot choose whether it will respond or not. We can.

We have the power either of withstanding the spring, and sinking back into the cosmic winter, or of going on into those 'high mid-summer pomps' in which our Leader, the Son of man, already dwells, and to which he is calling us¹.

¹ C.S. Lewis, "The Grand Miracle" *God in the Dock* (Eerdmans: 1970) 87-88.

to proclaim

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!)