



Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed alleluia!

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For Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and all power of hell, and fear, and pain, and shame is broken by that act. All is touched with healing and light. All begins anew.

Lent was a journey of homecoming – of coming home to God, and coming home to ourselves. And I don't know how that has gone for you. Perhaps you have taken small steps of re-finding, or discovering... perhaps you feel you haven't really travelled far at all.

Easter says... you know what... no matter how far you have travelled... you find yourself this day brought home. Home to love, home to new beginnings. For Jesus says, if you can't find the way... I

will take you there. He speaks with supreme confidence. And we can share that confidence with our Risen Lord.

The world tells us that we must measure our worth by what we achieve, by our money, our status, by our fears and our ability to earn what we receive. It is insidious. It gets into our hearts and souls, and makes us wonder, really, what we are. To think ourselves unlovable because we see our brokenness. To think ourselves unsaveable because we know our fragility. To think that somehow we must earn our right to love.

It tells us that we must be able to make things happen, that we have to find our own resources to meet the challenges and brokenness of the world..... and that our resources are really not enough to meet what we encounter in the world, in our lives.

Yet Easter tells us something else... it tells us that all we have to do is 'be there' – that in our flesh, in our human frailty, in all the blood, sweat and tears of life, we are joined with Christ, and we are joined with and share in his power for resurrection. That who we are is enough – in Him. To stand firm in the person we were created to be, returned home to the truth of our baptism.

The devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness to become someone he was not, and to achieve his ends by means other than sheer truth and love... and he did not swerve. The fear and hatred of the world tried to co-erce, corrupt, and condemn him.. but he remained true to love and forgiveness. Even fear and grief and weariness attempted to erode him in the garden, but somewhere within him the confidence in God's truth held strong. The powers of death and darkness took Jesus on the cross and found themselves unable to hold him.

The world tempts us, fear and grief meet us, and we can exhaust ourselves throwing ourselves at the brick walls of life, and perhaps

we don't feel we have the deep roots with which Jesus withstood the devil, and even death itself. And yet... the Lord who shared himself with us, shares his confidence too... his life, his deep-rooted truth ... and assures us, we do not need to do anything other than be who we are, and be it in him – in his grace, in his strength, which he shares with us. That was the whole point of Christmas, which began the journey to this day.

I'd like to share with you a poem by Wendell Berry, speaking of this confidence we are called to share... even amongst the troubles and uncertainties of our world...

The politics of illusion, of death's money,
possesses us. This is the Hell, this
the nightmare into which Christ descended
from the cross, from which also he woke
and rose, striding godly forth, so free
that He appeared to Mary Magdalene
to be only the gardener walking about
in the new day, among the flowers¹.

And there is resurrection. The glorious freedom of the Gardener – to be who he is. After all the trauma and the drama, just strolling in the garden – like nothing more has happened than a day's work, maybe just a bit of pruning and seeding, like he owns the place, like he *knows it* – every leaf, every flower, every seed. Known by name.

The resurrection proclaims the truth about how Jesus never leaves those he loves, and never changes the way he relates to them. How he sees and names and knows everything, bears everything, and yet.... holds all in love and life. Nothing can change the truth of who

¹ Wendell Berry 'This Day: Collected and New Sabbath Poems'

he is, and if nothing changes that, then we can take confidence in his confidence.

Each moment can blaze with hope, with stones of impossibility, rolled away.

Why are you weeping? Jesus asks Mary, using that title 'woman' – the one he used for his mother at Cena where he turned water into wine – the name that joins us to Eve – the first woman – joining the Garden of Eden to the Garden of the Resurrection; reminding us of the heavenly banquet and God's capacity to bring joy from loss and shame. *Why are you weeping?*

She cries out to him – *I don't know where my Lord is*. I wonder... in the 'politics of illusion' that Wendell Berry speaks of... how often we can lose sight of our Lord, amongst all the competing pains and voices of life. How often we can lose confidence.

But in that place, our Risen Lord calls our name, and sends us, like Mary, to tell our fellow pilgrims in this world the Resurrection Truth -

To proclaim that there is no place that the Lord cannot reach and heal and touch and hold, no one who is outside love, no one who is not good enough, nothing that is not able to have life and healing wrung from it, there are no dead ends in God's love, no mistakes we can make, nothing we can screw up, nothing that can be done to us, no pain, no shame, no fear ... that he cannot turn to life and light and goodness. That we are never ever lost to goodness, that our potential is endless with him.

That we can stand in his confidence to meet the world, named, Beloved, even with the tears fresh on our face, and the despair and questions still in our hearts.

Resurrection from the Crucifixion says that there is nowhere God is powerless, that all dead ends can be transformed to doorways into Life.

With my God, sings the psalmist, I can scale any wall². A stone is rolled away and a door stands open into heaven³, declares S. John, and life flows greening upon the earth

I leave you with words from the poet, Nicola Slee..

This is a door that has been closed
for longer than any one woman can remember

It's the knobless door,
the door going nowhere.

The door in the wall in the garden
outside the city where no one comes.

I'm standing there knocking and pushing and shoving
and scrabbling around for the key

but there's no way in
no way through from this side

after this, I looked: a door stood open.
You were standing there, I couldn't believe it was you⁴.

Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut

² Psalm 18: 29

³ Revelation 4: 1

⁴ Nicola Slee 'Seeking the Risen Christa'

Sisters and brothers, Jesus who shares our pain with us, shares with us the open door. When we are lost, he opens the way before us.

The Lord who strolls Godly in the garden, calls us to be people of the Resurrection - to walk lightly in the world, into the places of tears, fear, and grief, called by name, firm in conviction, held in love – and commissioned to share it.

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