

10th April 2020

Dear Friends,

Here we are in Holy Week, and looking towards Easter Sunday, a day of celebration and rejoicing, so I wonder how you have walked with Jesus this week. In our Circuit Staff Meeting this morning we shared both fears and joys, concerns and prayers, and it strikes me that Holy Week is very much like that, we have walked with Jesus as he entered Jerusalem to the cheers of the crowd, as he challenged the merchants in the temple about justice, to the last supper where he knelt at the feet of his disciples and washed them before sharing the bread and wine as a part of their last meal together, a mix of fear, doubt, questions and fellowship. We will have followed him to the garden, to the agony of his prayers, and then on to the trial, the cross and the crucifixion.

Then we enter the waiting time, Holy Saturday bring nothingness as resurrection stirs within the tomb, unseen, just as a bulb or seed stirs under the ground before breaking through the earth. If I am honest it feels right now that we are living in a cycle of griefs and joys, hurts, concerns and moments of relief, a Holy Week and Holy Saturday leading us towards hope, and a future that was unrecognisable. Remember Mary thought Jesus to be the gardener until he spoke her name.

Easter Sunday, the first Easter Sunday was not the huge celebration that we make it out to be today, if you doubt that, ponder this:

¹⁻² Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, breathlessly panting, "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him."

³⁻¹⁰ Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed. No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

¹¹⁻¹³ But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

¹³⁻¹⁴ "They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

¹⁵ Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

¹⁶ Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'" (John 20)

Read the passage slowly and bring to God your questions, a few things to ponder, Peter and John did not understand, Mary did not recognise Jesus, and when she did and wanted to hold him, he wouldn't let her!

In these days what do you want to cling to that seems impossible, lots of us a separated from family and friends, all of us from our usual ways of living. Where do you need to hear Jesus calling your name, and what would you like to say to him, hear his words, do not cling to me, what in these days do you need to let go of so that you can encounter Jesus afresh?

Now put yourself into the place of Peter and John, what is it that you need to understand from Jesus right now?

The Easter story is full of hope, but it is also full of questions, doubts and fears, the full understanding had not dawned upon the disciples, and I suspect has not truly dawned upon us! How does that speak to you today?

Please know that you all remain in my prayers, that I long to meet with you and worship with you again, please call me if you simply want a chat, or if you need to talk. I ask for your prayers, because my truth is the funerals are starting to come in, the peak we are told will be in 2 weeks, which means that in the next month things could become very difficult.

But we hold out hope, because the promise of Jesus is that a day is coming when all will be made well, and there will be no more sickness, sorrowing, crying or pain, for all will be made new.

We are people of the resurrection. Easter people, and always, always, God is for us, God is good!

I leave you with a song again, and an encouragement, however you celebrate Easter Sunday, send me a photo, and I will try to make them into a montage video and send it to you so that we can celebrate together.

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The song:

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
His cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
His love in death shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
he comes to claim the here and now,
and conquer every place and time.

Not 'throned above, remotely high,
untouched, unmoved by human pains
but daily, in the midst of life,
our Saviour, with the Father reigns.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
he suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, though ever crucified.

Christ is alive! His Spirit burns
through this and every future age,
till all creation lives and learns
his joy, his justice, love and praise.

Many blessings to all of you, and please if you can send me your photos

Christ is risen

He is risen indeed

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Reverend Sally Coleman

Co-Superintendent

Sheffield Methodist Circuit