

Easter Sunday
5th April 2026

Alleluia, Christ is Risen.

He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

You may have noticed that on Easter morning we take every possible opportunity to say our alleluias with great joy. And that is not all. We process in with the Easter candle; bless the Easter garden; and soon we will be renewing our baptismal vows. This is not a normal service, it is something special, because we are recognising something special and important.

I do recognise, though, that this can seem a little incongruous. A glance at the newspapers would suggest to us all too quickly that we really don't have very much to celebrate. However much we pray for peace, the nations of the world seem to be blighted by warfare. We look on with horror at events in the Middle East and the Ukraine, to name but two. And despite our desire for power to be used wisely, we are regularly confronted with the ways in which those people who have power and influence misuse it.

It is not unusual for people to ask me how on earth I can continue to believe in God in the face of so much brokenness in the world.

It's not an easy question to answer. But let me give it a try, on this Easter morning, when I really do believe that we have reason to celebrate.

When I think of the things that make a real difference to my life, here are some of the things that I come up with. Moving into a new home, and finding that there were already cards of welcome on the doorstep. And that offerings of flowers, chocolates, and more cards arrived in the days that followed. I looked at the names of people I did not yet know, and felt deep gratitude that each one had thought to make that effort at a time of significant stress for me and my husband.

Whenever I am driving, I am disproportionately grateful to those people who let me out at a junction. They don't have to do it, and there are plenty of people who don't, but when someone does, it makes my day better. Likewise when someone stops to pass the time of day in a shop. Or takes the time to offer directions when I am lost.

I realise that each one of these things may sound very small and insignificant, but these are what really make a difference to my life. And they extend, too, to those people that we know we can rely on when something goes wrong. The person we know will drop everything to help out; or make some phone calls for us; or simply be there to listen to the challenges we're facing.

In this morning's gospel reading, we follow two women to the tomb. I hardly need to tell you that women were not considered as important or powerful as men at that time in history. And yet these are the two first witnesses to the resurrection that the gospel writer introduces us to. It's not just that they're women, though. We may think that we know something about Mary Magdalene, but in fact the gospels speak of her only twelve times, and only Luke's gospel introduces her before the crucifixion. If that's what we know of Mary Magdalene, just think about her companion, referred to only as "the other Mary."

I wonder if the gospel writer is trying to remind us where we should be looking for what is important, and most especially for what is from God. Perhaps we will find signs of God not on the front pages of our newspapers, or indeed coming from those people who appear to hold great power and influence, but rather among the seemingly insignificant. The ordinary people. Those whose names we don't yet know. Those whose names we may never know.

And if that's where we should be looking, we also need to be clear about what we might be looking for. In Matthew's gospel, it probably helped Mary Magdalene and the other Mary that an angel appeared. Nevertheless, it's important to notice what *doesn't* happen. Wars do not cease; people's troubles are not suddenly over. Notice that the two Mary's leave the tomb with "fear and great joy". Twice – once by the angel, and once by the risen Jesus – they are told "do not be afraid." Their lives have not suddenly become easy. Their troubles are not over – at least not in the ways that we might expect.

The story of Easter is one of great joy – that is why we proclaim alleluia as often as we can. The joy, though, is seen in unexpected ways.

When Jesus is raised from the dead, we are reminded that the unspeakably awful things that human beings are capable of doing are not the end of the story. That they can and will be overcome by the power of love. Here on earth we catch glimpses of that truth all of the time. In the many kindnesses of friends and strangers. And we are called to be a part of that truth. To show love to others in whatever ways that we can.

The transformation of Easter is at least in part in our hearts and minds. It is in daring to believe that it will always be worth going the extra mile; that the power of love is stronger than the power of death; and that each one of our thoughts and actions really does matter and really does make a difference.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed, alleluia.

Amen.