

Homily – Easter Day

Matthew 28: 1-10, Psalm 118.1-2,14-24

Christ is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed!**

Well, today is indeed the most glorious day in our Christian calendar. As our psalmist says, and as we sang to being our worship, this is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it. It is the day in which an angelic proclamation is made outside of an empty tomb. An angel of the Lord, in clothes as white as snow, declares to the visiting women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, “He is not here, for he has been raised.” They are, of course, referring to Jesus of Nazareth who only three days earlier had been betrayed, tried in something of a kangaroo court, and then crucified. How astonishing must it have been to these Marys? Even looking at the story with our post Christendom eyes, with ears that have heard the story time and again, it is still marvelous. No wonder they were afraid, earthquake, angel and then the extraordinary news that Jesus is alive, after they had not only witnessed his death, but also laid him in the tomb.

Well, what do we make of these first verses of chapter 28 of Matthew’s Gospel some 2000 years after it was written? The women visit the tomb with their embalming spices and are confronted with an absent body. The angel reminds them of Jesus’ own prediction, that he would indeed be raised. Sometime in the night, something had happened. Something mysterious, something unexplainable. And the world was changed. In this moment, human experience and expectation had been overturned by the transforming power of God. Jesus’ question on the cross “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” has been answered. He has not been forsaken. God did not forsake him. In his obedience and faith, he has been raised.

How often do we think we have been forsaken? How often do we look at our lives or our circumstances and wonder, where are you God? Perhaps through death of a loved one we wonder, perhaps through our own health battles we wonder, or perhaps in the circumstances of our family or close friends we wonder. God, why is it this way? And where are you? Sometimes we even find our lives confusing and distressing.

And perhaps these women were also somewhat confused as they go off to tell the disciples as the angel instructs them. And then, they encounter the risen Lord. They fall down and worship him and Jesus says to them “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me”. And this sets off the most compelling faith story the world has known, which has shaped our world for the last 2000 years, even reaching us here in Lara and Little River where today multiple Christian communities worship in churches like ours or in smaller home communities.

But all is not good in our world is it? We live in volatile times of human failure at the macro level, with wars being waged in places like the Ukraine, and also at the micro level, with domestic abuse and gun violence escalating in seemingly prosperous and civilized places like Australia and the United States. When we look at our own lives, many of us have lived through ups and downs, the slings and arrows that seem to be part and parcel of life.

So, what has made the difference? I think God makes a difference. Just as God raised Jesus into new life, so God brings new life into our lives, into our community. Hope for a better future in which we show our love to our neighbours and thrive. In many ways, we are surrounded by new life. We live in a suburban growth corridor with aspirational young families seeking to

build new lives for themselves. Perhaps it's time for us to consider what a resurrected Holy Trinity or Christ Church looks like in this community.

For God will not forsake us here in this part of the world. The good news of Jesus Christ is just as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago. But how do we go and tell our younger brothers and sisters about this good news? Well we do need to reach out and talk to them and then build our relationships with them. We probably also need to present a worship service that speaks into their experience, their culture. And I think we also need to view our community as a mission field, a place to actively go out and proclaim the Good News because this generation is not a generation that has grown up in church. It really is a green field mission field. We need to be where the community is, not simply expecting them to just come through the door on a Sunday.

And God does resurrect our lives, every day. The resurrection we heard about today in our Gospel reading, is not just about the promise of eternal life, as marvelous as that promise is. The resurrected Jesus lives with us and in us today and tomorrow, giving us the strength to fight the good fight and finish the race, as the apostle Paul says. We can be transformed here and now as the people of God, when we accept the love and grace of Jesus. And we as a community can also be resurrected when we show that love to the next generation and invite them to come and know Jesus, whether it's to a Games night, or Alpha or to one of the family friendly services that we hope to run in the future.

During the next part of our service, we will be reaffirming our own baptismal vows, a great way to share in the joy of the resurrection of our Lord. I will say as I bless the baptismal water in the font "Pour out your Holy Spirit in

blessing, that this water may be a sign of our new birth in baptism. May we continue forever in Jesus Christ our Lord.” We are called as a baptized people to be one with Christ, to live a resurrected life, free of sin, free of fear and to obey that great commandment to go out and make disciples.

So it is indeed a joyful day today.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Christ has Risen!.....