

Easter 2023 – Easter Day

Acts 10:34. 37-43; Ps 117; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

*Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, ... because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. 'But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.'*¹,

writes St Paul to the Colossians.

'Let your thoughts be on heavenly things.' Easter eggs are nice, but do not be distracted by a world which is passing at the expense of the things of heaven which are eternal. Easter, this day of all days, recalls us to a task at hand. This is a day of rejoicing, the most holy day of celebration and joy, hope and expectation, of felicity and exultation.

This day we do not rejoice that God in heaven came down and touched the earth, making himself known in human flesh and with a human face. This day we rejoice that God in heaven lifted from us the curse of death so that we might live in heaven.

This day the signs of Jesus healing the Centurion's servant from the point of death,² reviving Jairus' daughter from death³, and releasing Lazarus from the tomb cumulate with the greatest sign: Jesus' own resurrection from the dead.

Whereas our Lord had restored or revived the life of others whom he had touched or spoken to or prayed for, Our Lord has himself been raised back to life under his own authority. He has not raised himself

back to a life that must perish again in its natural course, but taken on a new life of which his earthly life before the cross -in all that he said and did - was but a sign of what was to come. In doing this he has given us ground for Hope and Faith and he has pointed us towards Heaven.

Of course, now you must live in the world: you must, and you must live it well. It is God's gift to you. You must heal the sick, aid the poor, visit the lonely and imprisoned, feed and give drink to the starving and to the thirsty, care for his other creatures and for the planet in His name. But they are not an end in themselves. The end is in Heaven. This is the message of the Resurrection.

The sign of the resurrected Christ does not mean that we must not be afraid to die, it means we must not be afraid to live in Christ! It is quite possible to cover yourself in noble acts, say they are of God and yet perish inside. It is not possible to hide inside what truly is of God as it will be manifest in your life, and your life will be your noble act of self-giving back to God.

Now we need to be absolutely honest with ourselves: the Resurrection is not about life becoming easy, or painless in this world. It is not about being raised from the dead so that things will go on the same way before but in a happier, care-free way. It is about the ability to look at what is broken in the world and in ourselves, to see where people have made God absent and invite him in. When God has been invited in to these places which are dark and painful, then we will have started to turn back to him by asking for forgiveness for our waywardness. God

¹ Col. 3: 4

² Matt 8:5

³ Luke 8:40

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gives us his Son so that we might be able to ask for forgiveness from God in God's own name. Easter is about receiving forgiveness so that, as Peter tells Cornelius: '*...all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.*'⁴ This brings reconciliation with the God who loves us so much that he holds nothing back in bringing us home.

From this day forth we will not be afraid to live this life knowing that heaven is our eternal home. Hold up your heads and follow the cross of Christ our Lord and King with purposed Hope and Faith.

⁴ Acts 10:43