

Sunday Thought

4th April 2021 Easter Day



Readings

Isaiah 25: 6 – 9

Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 14 – 24

1 Corinthians 15: 1 – 11

John 20: 1 – 18

Let's Celebrate !

Hopes are growing. There are signs of a *Pandemic Conquest*. People are already planning how to mark their freedom from lock-down – *Let's Celebrate!* – with a *simple get-together – a staycation – a party – a worship service ...* Victory celebration was the prophet's dream in our reading from Isaiah today. He looks to the time when God's Kingdom will come for all the world. It will mean the end of warfare, death, destruction, disease and sorrow. It will be a time when everyone will say *He is our God, our Saviour. We will praise him in words and songs and lifestyle.* Isaiah envisages the day as a great celebration feast. However, that is just a fleeting shadow of God's real victory celebration – The Easter Festival!



In many parts of the world Easter is a much more colourful celebration than our observances – with processions through the village and city streets, loud music and much choral singing and dancing. Reading again today the words of Paul to Christians at Corinth I think he would approve. *'Let's celebrate this greatest event in the world's history,'* he is saying. *'Let me tell you best news anyone can ever hear – The Lord, our God is powerful and victorious over all evil. He has defeated death! We know this to be true because his Son, Jesus died for us and rose to life again. Now he shares his new life with everyone who trusts in him.'*

Paul goes on to say, *'Our proof of this is that we have seen him and spoken to him! He appeared to all his disciples in the days following his resurrection – and eventually he appeared even to me who had tried to denounce him and obstruct the work of his kingdom. Come on! Let's celebrate!'*

That personal experience of Jesus was at the heart of all Paul's work – all his teaching and preaching, his world mission, his trials and suffering – *'Jesus met me on the road to Damascus.'* Later, on trial in Jerusalem he recounts that story in more detail – how he fell from his horse and experienced three days of blindness.

How often he must have reflected on that dramatic encounter. When a day of celebration is over, we spend time turning over vivid memories of all the best things which have happened. It was surely like that too for Mary of Magdala. On the first Easter morning she was at Jesus' borrowed tomb before it was barely light. Discovering the stone rolled away and Jesus' body gone she hurried to bring Peter and John to help find out what had happened. Helpless, they returned home leaving Mary weeping at the grave. It's then she is involved in one of the most precious moments in the whole Bible. Seeing someone she believes to be a gardener she asks him if he knows of the whereabouts of Jesus. He speaks just one word – her name – *'Mary!'* In a poignant moment of recognition she responds – *'My Master!'* She had met him -alive again! It's an incident which highlights the greatest truth of Christian experience – *however hard we search for God and for faith in him, ultimately it is **he** who comes looking for us!*

I pray that as we reflect on our Easter celebration we may remember moments when we found God finding us. That's the real wonder of Easter! – a cause for great celebration!

A Prayer for Easter [thoughts from Psalm 118]

*Lord Jesus Christ we celebrate your victory
Of life conquering death;
Of love overcoming evil;
Of joy transcending all life's pain and sorrow;
Of strength surpassing our stress and weakness;
May my reflection on this day of celebration assure me that
'We shall not die, but live to proclaim what God has done!'
Thank you, Lord Jesus – 'Rabboni!'*