

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018**  
**Easter Sunday**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Acts 10.34-43**  
**NT: I Corinthians 15.19-26**  
**G: Mark 16.1-8**

One of our patients died recently, a rare occurrence for us as we are a rehabilitation centre.

In the last two weeks of his life, it was hard to watch him suffer, despite all the input that modern medicine can provide. On more than one occasion, I was called out in the middle of the night as his condition deteriorated. When he eventually died, we washed him and laid him out. I was then very honoured to be asked by his family to take his funeral. In this way I feel I have experienced again the events of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, watched a man suffer, die and be laid to rest.

Death is inevitable for all of us – the how and when may be unknown but nothing we can do can prevent our eventual demise. Death is an essential part of human existence. There is an island in the Menai Straits, Church Island, which can be reached by a causeway and which looks like something straight from Gothic novel with its huge yew trees and vast array of tomb stones in various states of grandeur, simplicity and decay.

One of the first you find as you walk through the gate is the grave of a girl, a twin, just two days old. She died in 1943 and yet there were fresh flowers on her grave. She remains loved and cherished by someone still, more than 70 years after her death. Another stone commemorated a local man and his 2 sons. Sadly the remains of the first lie in an unknown grave in France, a victim of the First World War. And the second is buried there, having died of his wounds in the Second World War. There was no mention of a wife, a mother but the simple stone told a story of great grief and suffering.

Different generations view death in different ways. The Victorians positively revelled in it with their Memento Mori, relics of the dead, and Sunday afternoon strolls around cemeteries. Today it seems that people don't die but pass away and increasingly, simply pass which is something that I always thought you did with a driving test or painful kidney stones.

Death is an essential part of human existence, it is inevitable for all of us.

We cannot escape death but we can believe that it no longer holds complete power over us.

Today we celebrate the victory of Jesus over death, his opening of the gate of heaven, his redemption of all humanity from the chains of sin. Through his selfless sacrifice of himself for love of us all, Jesus brings us the gift of eternal life. Not a life that allows us to cling to this world but a new life that is beyond our imagination. Just as a child in the womb can have no concept of all the wonders that await if after birth, so we do not know the glories and joys of what is to come – at least not beyond the experience of supreme love, a love which we have begun to know in this world.

You would think it would be easy to write an Easter sermon but sometimes words fail in describing the overwhelming magnificence of what we are celebrating today, even overindulgence in chocolate cannot do it justice. I feel I should be inviting you to join me in a conga around the church in an attempt to express our sheer joy. We are the Easter People and Alleluia is our song. For us death no longer has a sting, for us life will be changed not ended. We are loved with a love stronger than death, a love that unites us forever to Our Lord and Saviour, a love which sets us free to live this life without worry or fear.

But we should not keep this good news to ourselves. We are called to tell out our story of redemption to all those whom we meet.

*And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*

We are the Easter People and Alleluia is our song. We are called to live lives of hope and joy, to work to dispel darkness and despair, to bring freedom to those bound by the worries of this world.

But we cannot fulfil this mission if we do not truly believe ourselves. The gospel stories throughout Eastertide will portray this journey of the disciples from their initial disbelief at the women's story of the empty tomb, their doubt at the sight of the risen Jesus, their lack of understanding of the enormity of the significance of the Resurrection through to their own transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to proclaim the Gospel at the cost of their lives.

There is an exercise you might have done on one of those awful team building days. You stand in front of your team member and fall back, trusting that they will catch you. That is what Jesus asks of us – to place ourselves completely in his hands, to fall back on his mercy and love, to believe completely in him so that nothing else matters. He knows that all will be well, that after the crucifixion, the Resurrection always follows.

I have watched a man suffer and die and be laid to rest but I have never seen the Resurrection yet I believe.

*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.*

We are the Easter People and Alleluia is our song.

Alleluia Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Revd Michelle Montrose