

**Sunday 20 April 2025**  
**Easter Sunday**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Acts 10:34-43**  
**NT: I Corinthians 15:19-26**  
**Gp: Luke 24:1-12**

Why do you seek the living among the dead?

The question hits home. Over these last forty days, and especially over the last week, we have followed in the footsteps of Jesus. We have followed them to the point where they stopped: at the end of a trail of blood and tears, with the drag marks of his own cross left in the dust behind him. To the place of the skull, and darkness in the sky and the triumph of those who use violence and humiliation as tools of power. We have spent time with one condemned to die, in the places where death has dominion.

And yet. And yet we are here. And the place of death is empty and a voice we know is calling our name.

Why do you seek the living among the dead?

I could read you a litany. A litany of the dead places in our world today. The headlines, like headstones marking the places where life does not seem to matter. I could call to mind all the times when might seem to crush the frail flowers of kindness and peace. It would feel familiar. It would taste like stale bread. I could remind you of the stone-heavy hopelessness that can lie upon our hearts.

And yet. And yet you are here. Daring to hope that it is all worth so much more. Daring to believe that love is stronger than death. Daring to hold on to faith, in spite of it all.

Why do you seek the living among the dead?

He was nailed to wood so he could not move. He was stabbed in the side to check he was dead. He was put in a tomb which was sealed with a stone. He became the scapegoat – the one whose walk we had to stop, whose words we had to silence, whose breath we had to choke off. And we thought we'd done a good job of it, because we had the police and the soldiers and judges and priests on our side.

And yet. He would not stay put. His Word would not be silenced. No stone was heavy enough to crush his heart. Our ancestors in faith were defeated and grief-stricken; but in the end, they had to confess: He is risen.

Of course, the world might demand proof. We might ask ourselves: what would we have seen if we were there? What if there had been CCTV footage of the tomb? But these are the wrong questions – questions that look back, that distract us from meeting the risen Christ in the present. What we experience now is more important: because we experience what those first followers did: that he is alive, he is among us, he is in us. He is risen.

True resurrection is always now. It is something to be experienced, not just speculated about. It happens when death loses its hold over our minds, our bodies. When we hear the angelic words: do not be afraid. Without fear, the dominion of death is broken.

*True Resurrection* is the title of a book by the great Anglican theologian and monk of Mirfield, Harry Williams. He wrote that resurrection always involves an experience of communion. So much of what brings death and fear in our lives is actually the breaking of communion. We cut mind and body apart, so we are neither grounded in our thinking nor at home in our flesh. We separate ourselves off from the natural world, reducing it to raw materials, and wonder why we feel so homesick and torn. We turn our backs on those who look or speak or love or think differently from us.

And all of this begins when we cut ourselves off from the divine image within us, from the Word who weaves us into life and the Spirit who longs to make her home with us. Communion is the image of God: and when we worship God as Trinity in Unity we are affirming in the best way we can the mystery that God is also a communion of loving relationship, of endless mutual cherishing.

True resurrection is to experience that communion again as the reality of who we are. It is the healing of all separation. It is the opposite of all that would nail us in place or seal up our hearts. Whenever we taste communion with ourselves, creation and one another then we are meeting the Risen Christ, the eternal Word. He is calling us back to our true name. It is not surprising that it is often those on the margins who are first open to the truth of resurrection. It is not the 12 disciples, the symbols of a new Israel, who first go to the tomb, but the women who experienced a new freedom in Jesus's presence. It is not the authorities and empires who bring the gospel, but fishers and tentmakers who are called to be his messengers. These are people so often denied communion but finding it in Christ. They become his body in the world.

These first disciples found that it was in joining together in prayer, in breaking bread together, that they experienced the presence of Christ most intently. When communion was shared, Christ was among them. And they found that he was the same Christ they had been following all this time. The resurrection deepens and affirms all that Jesus did and said. It is the incarnation of the living God in the fullness of our humanity, even in death. It is the kingdom of God, pushing its shoots up through the earth and bringing radical acceptance.

Throughout his life, Jesus sat at a table with people as a sign of this kingdom. The disciples know this as Christ comes to them in his risen body, human and scarred and gloriously alive. They know it as he eats and drinks with them.

So have we done ever since: whether we call it eucharist or mass, at the heart of this sacrament is communion. Across millenia and geographies of huge cultural difference, that is the steady pulse of grace. In all the times that Christians have not lived their calling, and have fostered injustice and division, this still small voice remains in the broken bread and the outpoured wine. God invites us to be loved, to be forgiven, to be restored. To be in union with God and with one another. This is not just an assembly of people who come together for a service, hear some words and go their separate ways. It is also the breaking in of the resurrection. Here, communion is put into your hands. Here, we are made a people able to bring that good news to the rest of the world, in our words and in our actions. To remind the world that it is rooted, not in death, but in grace and love. In communion.

If true resurrection is to experience communion again, then it is ours to taste and know today. It is not just a past event or future life. It is now. For we who have died with Christ also live with him.

Is it true? Is it real? Come, taste and see.

Alleluia, Christ is risen; he is risen indeed.

**Fr Steven Shakespeare**