

**Saturday 19 April 2025**  
**Easter Vigil**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Genesis 22:1-18**  
**Exodus 10:14-15:1a**  
**Ezekiel 47:1-12**  
**NT: Romans 6:3-11**  
**Gp: Matthew 28:1-10**

Jesus is Risen! Happy Easter! This is the day/evening where, all around the world, for the last two thousand years, the Christian church has celebrated and told again the story of Easter Sunday – the story of Jesus' resurrection. The forty days in the wilderness of Lent have passed. Jesus has risen from the dead and has drawn us together this evening in hope of overcoming the power of death, our sadness, our frustration.

So, let's take a minute to take it all in. Enjoy it and savour the moment. But be careful. Take care not to miss it. And don't let it go. While you take it all in, I am going to tell you a story.

Once upon a time, a man heard about a beach that was covered in rocks, where one of those rocks, just one, would bring you eternal happiness - if you could find it. And you would know which rock it is, because if you held it, it would turn warm in your hand when all the other rocks just feel cold.

So, the man sells everything he owns to get to that beach where, one by one, he begins to pick up the rocks. Time after time he is disappointed because they are all cold in his hands. After a few days he realises, I must be picking up the same rocks. So, he devises a plan to test a rock in his hand, and if it is cold, he throws it far out into the sea.

So, for weeks on end, that man picks up a rock, feels if it is cold to the touch, and throws it into the sea. Hundreds of rocks, thousands of rocks. Cold, cold, and cold again. Until one day, he picks up a rock that looks very much like all the others, but it turns warm in his hand! And before he could comprehend the miracle that is occurring, his arm just sort of automatically throws the rock out into the sea along with all the others. He missed it. He missed his Easter moment! I don't want that for us. I don't want us to be so wrapped up in what we want in life, that we miss our Easter moment!

We have walked with Jesus through Holy Week, and we join together to celebrate that Jesus is alive – alleluia! Thank God! Because part of the miracle of Easter is that we are not alone. We are part of a huge congregation of people who live out the resurrection – we are an Easter people, and today/evening is our day of feasting and joy. Of course, the Jesus story doesn't make all our own pain and doubt and grief go away. That's another crucial part of the story of today – that Jesus suffers with us, Jesus understands the darkest places we go to, and yet Jesus is bigger than all that suffering.

That's what resurrection means: the worst thing is never the last thing. As Matthew describes it to us, that first Easter Sunday morning is chaotic, dramatic, and terrifying. Then the angel speaks some familiar words, familiar at least to anyone who has been visited by an angel, 'Do not be afraid'... Then: 'He is not here; for he has been raised'.

Some questions for us this Easter: - What does 'resurrection' mean to you? Is it just about an old story, or does it speak to a deeper truth? - How can you share stories of resurrection with people you might meet this week? The angel says, 'He is not here, for he has been raised'. Where are you looking for meaning, for God, in your life? Is it in the equivalent of an empty tomb? Where do you think the angels would tell you to go if they could stand in front of you today?

What presented itself to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary that first Easter morning in their encountering with the empty tomb, where a dead man should have been, but was not, was the incredible assertion that our lives, our often turbulent, awkward, surprising, and sometimes very joyful lives, are only part of a journey toward that which is eternal Resurrection!

So, think for a moment of a time when everything did feel just right. Or think of how good it was when someone unexpected helped you in a time of pain. Or think of a time when a relationship that was broken was healed and things were put right again. Think of a time of great joy. These moments when goodness and wholeness are apparent to us, become experiences of faith. It doesn't matter how brief or fleeting the moment, whether it was long ago or just the other day, whether it was a really spiritual experience or seemed natural or ordinary.

Think about a time when you felt totally at peace, when things were well and as they should be, even as life with all its challenges, disappointments, and heartaches were spinning all around you. That is an Easter moment, a resurrection moment, life in the midst of death, and a glimpse of things to come when death is no more. In moments like that, in moments like this evening, we could live forever, all because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today also reminds us that the light of Resurrection always triumphs. Darkness cannot overcome the light. Regardless of what you have done or left undone, the light triumphs. Regardless of your doubts or beliefs, the light triumphs. Regardless of your life's circumstances, the light triumphs. I can't tell you how it happens, but I know that it does.

The light of resurrection always wins and everything we can say about this evening says that. That changes everything about how we live. We now live every day as Easter. The resurrection of Jesus is not a one-off celebration. It is a way of life.

I cannot see how any of us can ever fully grasp the wonder and mystery of Easter Day. The concept of Resurrection is overwhelming. It is waiting on God to show himself more clearly to us, that enables us to enter his full reality. Mary Magdalene is the first to discover the

empty tomb and the angel says to her- Do not be afraid'. Just as Mary did, let us discover this risen Jesus for ourselves, to not miss the opportunity and to proclaim to all we meet that He is risen! Let us be Easter people every day. Alleluia!

**Mthr Jennifer Brady**