

Sermon for Easter Day at Holy Trinity Geneva 5 April 2026

Texts: Jeremiah 31.1-6; Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18

Easter Day Sermon

“Alleluia, Christ is risen:

“He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia”

These are the triumphant words of acclamation with which we proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus at our Easter Vigil last night.

Yet we are all very aware as we gather here this morning that the deepening crisis in the Middle East is casting such a shadow over our world. It's hard not to feel grief as we see the tragic impact which the war has had so far with such loss of life, destruction of homes and livelihoods. So many people have been displaced from their homes and the effect of the conflict on the economies of the world is devastating, particularly hitting the most vulnerable.

Many here today may also be in a difficult place – perhaps of anxiety for the future, struggling with difficult relationships, enduring loss and bereavement or pain and long-term illness. We know also with the major cuts to UN funding and its related agencies that Geneva has become a far more uncertain city in the past year.

In this context, it can feel difficult to discern what the Easter message of hope means and indeed we can rightly be concerned of speaking too glibly of hope when there is so much suffering.

In some ways the fears, uncertainties and darkness of our own hearts at this time, mirror the experiences of the disciples in the days which followed Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. They had put their trust in him, committed everything to following him for the three years of his ministry and believed that he was the one who, as Messiah, would vindicate his people and liberate them from the cruelty and oppression of the Roman occupation of their land. As the crowds cheered, waved palm branches and spread their cloaks as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, how their hopes must have soared.

We can only imagine the bitter anguish they experienced when he was arrested in front of his very eyes in the Garden of Gethsemane, tried both by Herod and Pilate, and condemned to be crucified. Not only anguish at all their lost hopes and loss of their beloved Teacher but also anguish for themselves as they were now in fear of their lives.

But as we have just heard, on Easter morning Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, finds the stone removed and encounters the risen Christ. Her sorrow and despair are turned to wonder and joy, and the effect on her is so dramatic that she longs to cling to Jesus, so that this moment will last for ever. Yet Jesus tells her not to cling – for he is commissioning her to bring the news of his resurrection to the disciples so that they too may be prepared to encounter their risen Lord.

So what does the resurrection of Jesus tell us amid the darkness, confusion and suffering of our world just now?

It shows us that there is a deeper reality than what we are witnessing at present in the world and perhaps too experiencing in our own, individual lives.

That reality is that God, who created us and loves us, from the beginning of time, desires to bring all creation into his saving love through Jesus. Jesus shows us the human face of God who loves us and never gives up on us, despite our sins and failures and the terrible damage which we have inflicted on the world. And on the Cross, we see the love of God made visible as Jesus freely offers his life for us.

On that first Easter morning, we see that Jesus' death on the Cross was not the end, but rather the beginning. Out of God's supreme act of love for us, new life has come and new hope – which death cannot defeat and this is what we are celebrating today.

When we struggle to see hope in the current world crisis and in challenges we face in our own lives, it's important to remember that the resurrection occurred in the darkness. Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb as soon as the Sabbath is over, whilst it is still dark. It is not only physically dark, but she is locked in painful darkness of grief and despair. Yet the resurrection has already taken place. Even as Mary weeping says to the angels at Jesus' tomb, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him", Jesus is standing there before her and death has no more dominion over him.

One of the most exciting events this week has been the launch of the NASA Artemis II mission around the moon. This is the first moon mission for over fifty years and the first which will orbit the far side of the moon. Already we have seen amazing images relayed from the spacecraft as they orbit Earth and have heard initial reflections from members of the crew.

Two things have particularly struck me. The first is the astronauts' vision of our planet – seeing it for the first time from a totally different perspective. Christina Koch, one of the four astronauts commented, "There's nothing that prepares you for the breathtaking aspect of seeing your home planet both lit up at night and also the moon glowing on it at night'.

The second was the reflection of another of the astronauts, Victor Glover, on how seeing the Earth from the perspective of space, enables one to see unity rather than different. He commented, "From up here, you all look like one thing Home sapiens is all of us, no matter where you are from or what you look like. We are all one people".

Today on Easter Day we too are being given the gift to glimpse our lives and our world from a new perspective. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are shown God's perspective and what a different perspective it is! It shows us human conflicts, hatred and bitterness and the worst that these can do in terms of the misery we inflict upon each other as well as suffering we endure in different ways are not final word. God loves us and has revealed the depth of that love through His Son Jesus Christ who died for us and has been raised by God today to new life.

Jesus has also shown us in the final Passover meal that shared with his disciples before his arrest, a new way for us to live together. As he astonished the disciples by kneeling before them to wash their feet, he showed how God calls us to live in harmony by serving one another, seeing and hallowing God in the face of others rather than trying to lord it over them.

Then in the Eucharist, which Jesus initiates with his disciples that night as the sacrament which would bind their community together after his death, we see how God in Christ offers himself to us now, bringing his spirit of reconciliation, peace and new life. And he invites us, in turn, to bring this new way of living together in love, God's perspective to our hurting world, through the ways we in turn, care for, love and strive for our mutual well-being and are willing to forgive and seek reconciliation with any who have hurt us or whom we have hurt.

On Good Friday, our young people had prepared a wonderful series of prayer stations with meditations based on some of Jesus' stations of the Cross. These included one on the importance of friendship based on Veronica, the woman who, according to tradition, wiped the blood and sweat from Jesus' face as he carried his cross. This act of kindness from a stranger is a symbol of God's message of love and reconciliation, which, as God's Easter people, we can bring to the world today.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed, Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Amen

Canon Daphne Green