**Easter Sunday Sermon notes**

Keep on being good news, talking good news, telling the truth in love, and most of all, believe in your hearts and say with your mouths that Jesus is Lord and you will be saved.

That’s the word I want to bring to you and everyone who is watching and listening. When the first followers of Jesus found themselves in a somewhat awkward position - everything they had known about life had been turned upside down and, at least for the first few hundred years of the faith that proclaimed Jesus as Saviour of the world, they met in secret and often fearfully. What keeps someone proclaiming Jesus is Lord when life is hard? For many of us, this is at least the strangest Easter we’ve ever faced, if not the hardest. I’ve noticed that people are starting to feel the pressure and the strain after the first few weeks’ excitement at being in lockdown has started to wear off.

All over the world, throughout Christian history and even today, to be a Christian is to invite pain, suffering, even death.

And still, Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart and say it with your mouth you will be saved.

How can this be?

Well it’s because, for one thing at least, on that first Easter Sunday, the women who went to the tomb of Jesus found he wasn’t there. He’d been raised from the dead. Raised from the dead? That’s mad, can’t have happened, can it? Except that Jesus himself had raised Lazarus from the dead a few weeks before all this took place. People had seen it and had believed Jesus to be the Messiah and had followed him.

It’s almost as if, as well as raising his friend from the dead, Jesus was pointing to what was going to happen in a few short days and all that those who were watching and paying attention could know. That Jesus is Lord, and it brings glory to God the Father.

What is glory? Recognition of goodness, recognition of love and power, recognition that the one getting the glory deserves to be thanked, praised, worshipped. It’s something beyond the way that we make celebrities out of people who achieve relatively minor things like winning reality tv contests or doing well on social media. True glory should make you shudder a little bit. It ought to cause you to breathe more quickly. It ought to cause you to tremble a little bit because what we’re dealing with when we talk about the glory of God the Father is something beyond what most of us have ever known. Jesus gave glory to God whenever he had the chance because He wanted us to recognise who was at work through all that He did, and so we find that all the more on Easter Sunday.

Death thought it had won. Evil was celebrating its triumph at defeating the great hope of love, joy, peace, of forgiveness and freedom.

Death was wrong. Evil celebrated too early. Jesus defeated death both on the cross and in the resurrection. Just when everything could have been lost, ultimate victory for good, for all the things we need, for the person, Jesus and for his heavenly Father, all happened. Easter Sunday is a huge deal, a huge deal, a huuuuge deal. It is God showing his true power and using that true power for love, to offer life to you, right now, today, and to me.

We are living in days where it would be so easy to give in to fear, to doubt, to death even. I have a disability. There are conversations going on in public forums about whether it is right and proper to care for ‘some’ and I emphasise ‘some’ disabled and elderly folks if there is a shortage of ventilators, of resources of various kinds. I understand how complex and difficult these conversations are.

The Cross and the Resurrection say that every life matters. However weak and feeble, however early in life, or however late, the need for new life and new hope comes along, the Cross and Resurrection state categorically that God is for each and every person who breathes still and all those who will breathe in the future.

That includes you, whether you know God or not. You might have heard of God and about God but mot realised that Easter is about God making it abundantly clear once and for all that he doesn’t just want to be a topic of conversation or a concept to be placed in a museum. God wants us to know Him, to recognise Jesus as King and to worship Him.

Jesus first made himself known to Mary. She recognised his voice when he said her name. This always gets me. Tells me that she knew him so well that just a word at the right time caused her to realise who he was and open up her heart to him. She was not a person who was well-thought-of in her time and she has had a bad rep since, but Jesus knew what he was doing when he spoke first to a supposedly unworthy woman. Jesus had restored Mary’s honour before God previously in her story and he honoured her now even though in the eyes of others she probably was unworthy to receive any gift of God.

Which of us is worthy to receive what God has to offer without first coming to Jesus and bowing before Him? It’s not a trick question. None of us can get to the place on our own where we are in the right place to be called friends of God.

But with God all things are possible. Jesus has power to do whatever he wants when he overcomes death and his choice of how to use the power and authority he is given by God is to call us who follow him his friends, his brothers and sisters and to see us adopted into his family.

Safety and hope in the arms of God are ours to take today if we trust him. Trust him today. Easter is a story of Jesus’s ultimate trust in God. He sets the example and it sees him through to glory. We are offered that chance too. Do you want to take it today?

Keep on being good news, talking good news, telling the truth in love, and most of all, believe in your hearts and say with your mouths that Jesus is Lord and you will be saved.

Amen