

Endings - and Beginnings!

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

*I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.
[John 20:18]*

Two weeks ago today I was in my previous diocese, in Leicester Cathedral. I was privileged to have been invited to some of the ceremonies surrounding the burial of King Richard III. (If you looked very carefully, I did appear on the TV coverage 17 minutes into the service - still wide awake in the middle of the sermon!)

I have reflected on this -
Richard III was a king - if only for two years - who died,
they buried him,
dug him up
and then buried him again.

Throughout all this process he stayed dead: if he hadn't we probably would have heard a lot more from the Richard III Society.

Today the Church celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead - it is the fact that Jesus didn't stay dead that has kept this story being retold for 200 years!

The fact of the resurrection was shared by people telling the story - the story of Jesus.

- ✦ It isn't just the story of an empty tomb - the women saw that when they went to anoint Jesus' body, as did the men that the women, in their panic, called to try to find the body.
- ✦ It isn't just the story of the dead living on in the memories of those who knew them - the evidence of the shroud isn't enough for the text tells us that the men went home again!

In the confusion of that first Easter morning the mood wasn't hopeful - for the women and the disciples it was the fear that killing Jesus hadn't been enough, but that any evidence of his existence had also to be removed.

The story only takes off when Mary talks to the gardener and discovers that Jesus is alive; that Jesus isn't a ghost; that Jesus is physically there!

But what difference does Jesus' resurrection make to us today?

- ✦ The physical resurrection of Jesus assures us that we can depend on the spiritual promises. Because Jesus began again, so in God's grace we can begin again.

In Baptism we will celebrate the fact that Jesus conquered the power of sin and that we can be assured that we can be set free and can be forgiven.

That should make a difference!

- ✦ The resurrection of Jesus shows us that death isn't anything to fear. As Christians we are convinced that our life doesn't end when we die, but we are assured of eternal life with God. Does it sound strange? Is it unknown? Of course! Is it anything to worry about? Certainly not!

Anyone here remember what it was like to be in the womb before you were born? Even if you had, do you think you would have been able to describe what life was like outside the womb?

It was a reality and the life you live now is different!

Just like that, because we know this life we find it difficult to comprehend what follows - but that doesn't make it any less real!

That should make a difference!

- ✦ The resurrection of Jesus gives real hope!

In the western Church we have lost the need to hope and to hope against all the odds. If you were a Syrian Christian and following Jesus was a life or death matter then hope is tangible. It is relatively easy to find something to live for but finding something to die for is very different. Jesus, risen from the dead, gives hope in any and every situation.

That should make a difference!

We experience it first and then then we tell the story!

For a short while, Richard III may make a difference to the tourist industry in Leicester, but that will pass. It certainly hasn't made much of a difference to you and me (although I haven't sold my order of service on Ebay - yet).

The resurrection of Jesus transforms life and death for us all! We know it; we live it; we believe it!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!