

Risking Death - Discovering Resurrection!

Acts 10³⁴⁻⁴³; Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 15¹⁻¹¹; John 20¹⁻¹⁸

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. [1 Corinthians 15³⁻⁴]

If, as is likely, Jesus was born in 4BC and he died when he was 33, this is the 1990th Easter I have preached at an Easter service for 32 years - a small fraction of that (1.6%, in fact) I confess that on this Feast more than any other, I miss the space and the inspiration of being in Church. Yet the celebration and the message is undiminished!

So what is the enduring message of Easter. It is about Jesus and it is about us:

✠ Jesus rose from the dead. It is a simple fact that, though challenged by some, the evidence points to it as not just something that happened in the past, but something that was such a powerful event that it changed lives and it has changed the world. Not a lot more needs to be said.

✠ We have three distinct benefits:

1. We do not need to fear death - death is conquered by Jesus and when this part of our existence is over precisely because Jesus rose from the dead we have confidence that our existence will carry on in his presence.
2. Our sins are forgiven. Let me demonstrate - a bit dramatic, but so is forgiveness. (White handkerchief, iodine, water and photographic fixer solution.)
3. We live as liberated people - fear, doubt, guilt: all of these have no part in our emotional baggage - the fact of the resurrection deals with them.

Many sermons today will include a mention of the gold cross that shone out as a witness to the hope for the future after the fire at Notre Dame in Paris (not unlike the Cross of Nails at Coventry). That was a picture for Good Friday. The resurrection means we are no longer a restoration project that will take a generation (or a life-time) but we are already rebuilt by the generosity and grace of God.