

# Easter Sermon

**Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Easter Day**

*Isaiah 25.6-9; Psalm 118.1-2,14-24; Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18*

While the other disciples, women and men, were still frightened and distressed and confused at the empty tomb, the Beloved Disciple saw and believed, in the resurrection of Jesus.

Us human beings are capable of believing in some pretty strange things. We are also capable of disbelieving some very obvious things that are staring us in the face, but which we would rather not see. What we believe, or don't believe, is often much more of a choice than we care to admit. Indeed people are, in the end, very much responsible for what they choose to believe in.

I know it often doesn't feel like that, but we do in fact choose what to believe. And people will sometimes fight to defend their choice of beliefs. Extremists become violent, authorities become oppressive, nations go to war, lovers become abusive, Twitter mobs pile on ..... especially, especially, when people are actually rather insecure in their beliefs, or insecure in their sense of who they are, or just tired and emotional. Moderation in all things, is often helped by remembering that we are always, in the end, responsible for what we choose to believe.

Which makes it interesting and helpful, to think about why people believe the things they do. Why are they making that particular choice? Why did the Beloved Disciple choose at that moment, in the empty tomb, to accept the gift of believing that Jesus had risen from the dead? In the Gospel of John, the Beloved Disciple, the disciple loved by Jesus, (not, please note, the disciple who loved Jesus but the disciple whom Jesus loved,) stands for every disciple. We should always pay attention to this figure in St John's Gospel. For the key thing about being a disciple of Jesus, is that you are deeply, deeply loved, by Jesus.

You may not know it yet. It may take years for you to discover the real truth of how much you are loved. It may take you even longer to learn really to love Jesus yourself. But learning to believe in the love of Jesus, choosing to believe in the love of God, is at the heart of what it means to be Christian. And when you believe in that love, it is not so difficult to believe in the Resurrection, in the love that will not let us go, in the love that that did not lose Jesus.

So what does it mean to choose to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead? It means that we no longer bound by the things that belong only to this world, and which are not eternal. We are no longer bound by worldly desires for money, sex and power, though it may take many years of discipleship to discover our true freedoms from these and what they mean. We are no longer bound by fears of unworthiness, weakness and insignificance, but freed to discover that the fear of these bogies, which drives so much desperate human effort, denial and unhappiness, does not need to dominate human lives.

Instead, as we step into a sunlit resurrection garden, we are bathed in the light of God's love, liberated to become the people Jesus calls us to be, and inspired to live a quality of life that endures to eternal life, beyond even death itself. This is what Jesus means when he

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teaches people to pray Thy Kingdom Come; to live and hope for the things that only begin to be experienced in this life, but which endure for eternal life.

To live and hope for things like: an abundance of love and mutual service one to another; an abundance of compassion and bearing with one another's failings; an abundance of caring the welfare and needs of the vulnerable; and an abundance of liberation and new life for those who are enslaved in all sorts of ways. These, these are the things of eternity. These are the things of heaven, of resurrection.

Because the Beloved Disciple has learned from Jesus just how much he himself is loved, she herself is loved, they themselves are loved, he/she/they are then more and more ready, to live in the light of eternity, to be dead to sin, to be no longer trapped by sin, and to be alive to God, and all the wonderful things that are eternal.

How can you live like this, and believe like the Beloved Disciple, who saw and believed in the resurrection for Jesus from the dead? Well it starts by choosing to believe, daring to believe, that you are indeed eternally loved by God, more than you ever dreamed possible, without reservation. And then it continues with setting out in faith to discover what that means. Eventually there comes a point, when you can believe without reservation an extraordinary, amazing and mysterious thing, that that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Easter Day. Amen.

CJ. 4.4.21