

Easter Sunday 12-4-20

Let me wish you a very Happy Easter!

It's Easter Sunday! It's probably the most different Easter weekend any of us have experienced and not because we have done anything special but because we have not done anything special.

Is today any different from any other day over the last fortnight? It's a Bank Holiday tomorrow - Yippee! Where are you going? I think I might spend some time in the front room and I may even go into the unused box bedroom and look out of that window tomorrow.

Cytun - the churches together here in Penarth have encouraged us to put this poster in our windows. It's based on the Phrase made famous by Tony Campolo.

'It's Friday but Sunday's coming -
Friday, Jesus is dead on the cross -
Friday, Mary is crying her eyes out -
Friday, The disciples have run away, everything is lost -
Friday, You can't change things in this world -
Friday, and God's people unable to Celebrate Easter in the way that they always do
Friday when we are not able to meet with people to tell them the good news

Some of you will now think I've gone bonkers and that out burst is lost on you.
Some of you will know well Campolo's unique delivery of that line and be amused at my attempt to recreate it.

Tony Campolo and that line, and the truth behind it have had a huge impact on my life.

The events of this Holy Week and in particular this Easter weekend are staggering

It began last Sunday. It would be hard to overestimate the political and religious volatility incited by Jesus's actions on Palm Sunday—the Pharisees were taken by surprise and had no idea how to respond. Up to this point in Jesus's ministry, he could still have managed to live a long, happy, peaceful life, but his actions on Sunday set in motion a series of events that could result only in either his overthrow of the Romans and the current religious establishment—or his brutal death.

Of course it was the latter.

It's hard for us to feel the desolation and dereliction of the Cross
the shock, the sheer hopelessness of Friday

Ever since I was a small boy I have joined the silent march of witness in this town. We didn't do it this year. We were going to celebrate Maundy Thursday with Eden Church and Tabs, we didn't.

in church

Today we were going to be in this building celebrating

Christ is Risen.
cut to empty pews silence - no response

There's no one here but me. It's Easter Sunday and the church is empty. As is every other church in the Town, as is every other church in the country.

Think about it. It's Easter Sunday, the central day of the Christian Faith and probably just about every church in the World is Empty!

This feels more like Friday.

It's Friday! and the churches are empty
It's Friday and people are shut up in their homes
It's Friday and we can't join with our families and friends
It's Friday and the numbers infected with COVID 19 are growing
It's Friday and people in their thousands are dying from this pandemic all across the world.

What difference does Sunday make?

Cos today is Sunday, Sunday has arrived. But we are still in isolation.

We will come out of it so long as we follow the advice and stay in isolation. And I am on my own here, there is no film crew, it's just me as you can tell by the standard of the filming.

But it is Sunday
Christ is Risen
cut to zoom voices - He is risen indeed

We know. It's true, it's a well documented fact of history,
it's a truth that millions of people have lived and died for over 2,000 years,
it's a truth we can know in the very depths of our beings
with absolute certainty
Christ is risen.

certainty in an uncertain world

Reading John 20:1:18

Christ is Risen.

He appeared to his disciples, to many others in various settings over a couple of weeks before returning to His Father and sending the Holy Spirit, whom he had promised. It is that same Holy Spirit that reveals to us that extraordinary truth that

He is Risen

You can know that truth right now as you allow the Holy Spirit to convince you

Come Holy Spirit

Today is a lot like Yesterday, Tomorrow will be a lot like today
But everyday has within it the truth that because Christ is Risen from the dead -
EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

The cross on Friday looked like the end

<https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/videos-and-podcasts/the-comeback>

The Church building is empty
The Cross is empty
The Tomb is empty

Christ is Risen

Jesus had gone on, through death and out into a new world, a new creation, a new life beyond, where death itself had been defeated and life, sheer life, in all its fullness, could begin at last.

Resurrection means Jesus is Alive
Can you begin to imagine the event of this morning!
{Describe events} - Women confused and bewildered – but they get to be the first witnesses of the resurrection

Peter rushes in, then John follows, the grave clothes lay there as if the body had disappeared and left the now hollow grave cloths to collapse right there where they were.

Something new surges up in the John who wrote the gospel we had our reading from, a wild delight at God's creative power. He remembers the moment ever afterwards. A different sensation. A bit like falling in love; a bit like sunrise; a bit like the sound of rain at the end of a long drought.

A bit like faith. Oh he'd had faith before. He had believed that God had sent Jesus, that he was God's man for God's people and God's world. But this was different. 'He saw and believed. Believed that new creation had begun. Believed that the world had turned the corner, out of its long winter and into spring at last. Believed that God had said 'Yes' to Jesus, to all that he had been and done. Believed that Jesus was alive again.

We are Easter people! We have an Easter gospel, a gospel which means good news every week, every day of the year.

Resurrection means Jesus is Saviour
Set free from our wrong doing and every wrong that has been done to us.

Resurrection Proclaims a Glorious Hope

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."
they have taken away my husband; my home; my children; my rights; my dignity; my holes; my life.
The world's grief concentrated in Mary's grief.

Even for us in what we face

illness
bereavement
passed over for promotion
rejection
abuse
depression
all that the world is going through right now

We need hope

Resurrection Proclaims a Present Power

A power to overcome all that the world throws at us.

The God who remained apparently silent on Good Friday is having the last word. He is answering the spoken and unspoken questions. This is not just an extraordinary miracle, a display of supernatural power for its own sake, or a special favour to Jesus. What God is doing is starting something new, beginning the new world promised long ago.

The critical thing is that Jesus' resurrection is not about proving some point, or offering people some new spiritual experience. It is about God's purpose that must now be fulfilled. They must see Jesus, but that seeing will be a commissioning, a commissioning to a new work, a new life, a new way of life in which everything he told them before will start to come true. With all the powerful resources at hand.

If Christ be raised – Everything is Possible!

*if you want to listen to Blessing song playing at the end
finish with blessing song
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6aygmVzM4>*