

Sermon

21 April 2024

Saint Peter's

**The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near;
repent and believe in the good news**



In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Well the hot cross buns and the Easter bunnies may have gone from the supermarket shelves on Church Street, but here, in the church, the celebration of Easter continues. The Great Fifty Days of Eastertide is a seven week festival, celebrating the glory of the risen Christ.

‘Triumphant in his glory now,
His spectre ruleth all,
earth, heaven and hell before him bow,
and at his footstool fall’.

Wrote Fulbert of Chartres, the 11th century French bishop.

The resurrection of Jesus is the historical ground of the Christian faith. But it is not the whole history. The one God raised from the dead, and seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, is the one who lived, and died on a cross. The person and history of Jesus of Nazareth, is the Word of God. In his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension, He is the eternal Son of God.

There, in the beginning with God, before the foundation of the world, in Him God created the world. In His death, God reconciled the world to himself. In Him, God will one day perfect the world. He is the mediator of creation.

But already now, His participation in the Holy Trinity, in his eternal communion with God the Father, He now shares with us. Here, in holy baptism and holy communion the worldwide Christian church is there as a sign of the future destiny of the human race in the kingdom of God. A future destiny of eternal life for the human race beyond death. At Christ's return. When God will make all things new.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, it was the disciples personal encounter with the risen Christ that overcome their fear, their doubt, their despair. The Good Shepherd, the risen Christ came to his disciples, and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of peace. By Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit, the two hands of God, it was God himself who gathered them again after the crucifixion, who brought them back into the centre of the Christian community, who forgave, restored and healed them, who led them into the Christian faith.

The NT resurrection narratives make clear that the risen Christ is no mere spirit, no mere ghost, but a human being, a unity of body and soul. The Apostle calls it a spiritual body. The resurrection body, is like this mortal body – the disciples recognised that it was Jesus. But, unlike this mortal body, Jesus' resurrected body, was an immortal, eternal body. A body so permeated by God's spirit, a body so strong, that it was stronger than this mortal world. A body that transcended the normal limits of this mortal life. Leaving Jesus to move freely

now through them, beyond them. Free to appear to all of his disciples, free to move easily through doors, and buildings and walls. Free to share in table fellowship with them once more, but this time after his death, in fulfilment of his promise which he made to them at the Last Supper, the night before his death.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God. The time of waiting is over. In Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God himself has come into the world. Calling all people to repent – to turn away from their life of sin – to turn toward God through Jesus Christ – and believe in the good news of the kingdom of God.

The Easter event, the Passover of God, is the liberation of the world. The liberation of a world of sin, by Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. And it is marvellous in our sight. The message about the cross is foolishness to the gentiles, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God, the Apostle said.

The resurrection of Jesus is the historical ground of the Christian faith. But it is not the whole history of the Christian faith. The one God raised from the dead, and has seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, is the one who lived as one of us, and died on the cross to reconcile the world to himself. The eternal Son of God, who came down out of heaven, and took on flesh.

And what do we mean when we say that he took on flesh? We mean not just his life, but our life, too. We mean not just our life, but all human life. We mean not just life, but death, too, the consequence of sin.

Christ died once, to take away sin, and death. Our sin and death. All sin and death.

Christ died to reconcile the world to God. To bring us back, to God. To bring all people back, to God.

And God knows, what any right thinking human being knows – it is right relationship with God, and on this basis, with each other - that is exactly what the world needs more than anything.

A right relationship with God, and with other human beings, that is possible only when people turn back to God, by turning back to his commandments, to his righteous will for the human race, to the doing of divine justice, beyond this world of the manipulation of justice, by the many false teachers and prophets of this world.
his world as having moral authority in their lives.

Peace with God, with each other, and within ourselves, is freely available to all, on the condition of justice. On the condition of righteousness. On the condition of the kingdom of God, the will of God, being done, on earth, as it is in heaven. On the condition of trust in God, dependence on God, the forgiveness of sins, God's forgiveness of us, our forgiveness of others, on the condition of confession, repentance and commitment to live the new life, unencumbered by the old, the turning aside from temptation, the turning to God, to deliver us from every evil.

Peace is freely available to all, in short, when we practice what we preach. When we live as we pray. When the Lord's prayer is not only prayed, but lived. When the Lord's prayer, is lived out by the Lord's people.

When the Lord's commands are lived out by the Lord's people. When the Lord's people have put to death the shameful ways in which they once lived – putting other things before God, putting idols, idolatrous ideologies, before God – taking the Lord's name in vain. Hatred, which is murder, slander, coveting, unfaithfulness to your wife or husband, unfaithfulness to God.

All of this, all human sin, God condemned in the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So that you, and I, and every human being on the face of the earth, might walk, in newness of life. Our sins forgiven, by Jesus' death on the cross, Jesus calls us to live in newness of life.

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished'.

By the fulfilment of the law in the life of God's people, by the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, we will fulfil our calling to be faithful witnesses to the righteous will of God among the nations, and, therefore, to the God of Israel, as the one God, of all of the nations on earth.

By the living out of a moral life that is superior to that of the secular society around it, the Christian church will call society back to Christianity.

By sharing in the suffering of Christ, we share, too, in the assurance of our participation in the same glorious, exalted, resurrected life, that he now enjoys, beyond this world of sin.

As we who share in his sufferings, share too in his reign, already now, at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, far above every rule and authority, far above every principality and power, with all authority in heaven and on earth.

As it was for Jesus, so it is for us. By our life of humble obedience to God, and to the mission that we have received from him in this world, we have the assurance of our participation in eternal life, beyond this world. In the kingdom of God.

Right with God, and on this basis with all who are in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, we are at peace with God, and on this basis with all who are in Christ.

A righteousness, and a peace, within the Christian church, that is anticipation, and an anticipation, of the kingdom of God. And a sign of the future of the human race in the kingdom of God, at Christ's return.

Rev'd Jonathan Chamberlain
Vicar