

EASTER SUNDAY - 12th April 2020

Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 15.20 – 28

*But in fact, Christ **has** been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam so all will be made alive in Christ . . . For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Cor. 15. 20,25,26*

Reflection

The Lord is risen; **He is risen indeed!** Easter greetings to you all!

I hope you are able to stay positive as we remain in lockdown during this coronavirus epidemic. Despite having to stay indoors, spring continues to burst forth with new life! Although we may be feeling bored, anxious and a bit of cabin fever, I hope that these are not our primary emotions on this special day of the year when we celebrate our Lord's resurrection from the dead. It is a time of new life and hope, of joy and expectation. For this virus will end one day, restrictions will be lifted, and we will be able to gather once again for worship and find our lives restored to a semblance of normality. We know this on a human level, but also on a spiritual level, for God is with us throughout this time. God remains the source of life and love, the God of renewal, healing and reconciliation.

In my mind I can hear Handel quoting these verses in wonderful oratorio, THE MESSIAH. '*For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.*' In the Hebrew Scriptures first fruits of the field were to be offered to God in thanksgiving, in recognition that all life is a gift from God. (Exodus 23.16,19) The spring harvest would bring in the freshest, healthiest grain. Bringing a portion to God as an offering of thanksgiving would ensure that the offering was not an afterthought, bits of what was left over, but what was the best showing God due honour and respect. Christ, the first fruits, who gave himself as an offering for the world, was the first to rise from the dead so that we know that we too, in him may find new life, beginning now for all eternity.

'Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. . . even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' Along with the encouragement that Christ understands all our difficulties and comes alongside us in our struggles, having endured the pain and suffering of the cross, we have the amazing news that in Christ we may have new life in which all will be restored and renewed and made healthy and whole! For on that first Easter morning evil did not prevail. Suffering did not endure forever. All that the disciples' thought was irreversible, God brought back to life. Every assumption about the horror they witnessed, God countered with irrefutable, life-giving action. The tomb was empty!

Death will not have the last word. Life, and life in all its fullness, shall come! Therefore, we have hope and are given strength and patience to endure hardship for the present. And with that we may find that not only can we find peace in the midst of sorrow, we may find joy in fellowship and friendship with others as we care for each other. Let's enjoy the new life we find in spring and most of all the new life we find in Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end.

Prayer Lord, you are the source of life and love. Help us to tap-in to your goodness and energy and fulfil our calling as your people in these strange days, to your glory and honour. AMEN.