

Sermon for Easter Sunday 2020.

Isaiah 12. 1 Peter 1:3-9. Psalm 45:2-7. John 20:1-10.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

1 Peter 1:5 'By the power of God (you) are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.'

Happy Easter! Happy Day of Christ's Resurrection!

Some might ask: "What are you so happy about?"

They might go on to relate reasons why the world is surrounded by darkness and uncertainty. It's a fearful time for many when they can see no light from a distant shore. All they see is a shadow passing over the ground on its way to envelop people who fear the dark. They bring out scientist champions to fight against the monster, and they clap to encourage the army of medical warriors standing at their posts in frontline field hospitals. However amorphous this fear is, it demonstrates that people have faculties of empathy and spirituality rumbling in the depths, and they could be watered from the wells of salvation. In short, people have been created by God to know Him and to worship Him; and they need to know Him as their personal Saviour as well as their Creator. They need to know His name: Jesus. As Isaiah says (12:2) 'Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.'

On Radio 4's Today programme, Nick Robinson got a little more than he expected when his interviewee (a man recovering from coronavirus) began by telling him that Jesus had reminded him of the need to be calm though a storm was raging around the boat. Robinson politely put it down to the mind playing tricks with him whilst he had been undergoing treatment. But, the Lord's name had been honoured on the radio, and that can do nothing but good. Again, as Isaiah (12:3) says: 'Sing praises to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the nations, proclaim that his name is exalted.' We should pray that Nick Robinson and his co-presenters will be blessed by the Holy Spirit who will reveal the truth to him, and convert him.

St Peter in his first epistle writes that (1 Pet. 1:3) that: 'By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead'. That's why we Christians are Happy, especially on this Day of Resurrection. We are not stupid, nor deluded due to the effects of artificial respiration. Like St Peter, a direct witness of the resurrected Lord, we 'suffer various trials', and 'without having seen Him, (we) love Him'. Though there are increasing reports of people having encountered Christ today in various parts of the world.

You may be reading this sermon thinking: 'It would be nice to see Jesus, or to hear His voice, but that's just wishful thinking.' I would encourage you not to think too hard! Now, this might sound paradoxical, but if you think too hard, your mind gets cloudy. Last week I read an anecdote wherein an Oxford Don said of another that: 'They fall back on rationality if they really have to.' The trouble is that we imagine that answers to the hardest questions emerge from *within* us, and we are intrinsically sceptical about any answers that emerge from within somebody else! It was once said by Winston Churchill of Clement Attlee: 'I saw an empty taxi pull up, and out got Clement Attlee'. His opinion of him was obviously very low. Whether or not we admit it, we all have a tendency to judge others by our own standards (assuming ours are the best). So, I'm trying to say: "Yes, it would be nice to see Jesus, or to hear His voice." But, you won't see Him nor hear Him unless you invite Him to come in to your heart. He has to enter in by invitation. If you are busy moving the furniture yet again, you will be too distracted or deaf to see Him or hear His voice.

Christians can be happy despite having to 'suffer various trials,' because we are ready to have our genuine faith tested by fire. 'Bring it on!' as they say. We are happy because we've come to understand that we were/are not brilliant examples of humanity, knowing all the answers, applying our own standards of thinking and of moral exemplitude to life's difficult problems. We've come to realise that we love Him without having seen him, yet His risen presence has come to us in so many different forms in our earthly life. We're happy because we open our tombs to his scrutiny in genuine faith, and we 'obtain the salvation of our souls'.

Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed.
Allelulia.

