

All Saints, Grayswood

EASTER SUNDAY



Easter Celebration

Sunday 12th April 2020

Sermon

Well - I'm not going to forget my first Easter being in charge at All Saints am I!

Nothing in my training prepared me for the situation we find ourselves in today. I do wonder if anything will be added to the Ordinands training programme in the future? I'm sure how to use technology will certainly feature!

The fact that we are able (hopefully) to be able to see each other today is wonderful and I think highlights quite powerfully how important fellowship is.

There has been a huge amount of worship material put online. A lot of it has been excellent, some very creative and some just doesn't sit well with me for one reason or another.

But the one thing it can't do is bring us together in the way that we are used to when we are in church.

Obviously for some people they may never have the option - they may be housebound for one reason or another and these new services have given them access to church that they've never had before - and that is a positive thing. But for many, not having the physical company of others makes it much harder to worship.

When we entered lent, we knew that we were entering a time of reflection and desert before reaching today's celebration, but whilst we can celebrate Christ's resurrection today, it doesn't feel quite the same. Not to me anyway, you may feel differently.

It is right of course that we still celebrate Christ's resurrection today - that is one of the defining elements of our faith, acknowledging that Christ rose from the dead and is now ruling in heaven with God. But for now, Like Moses before us we are looking

for God to lead us out of this desert and to return us to the promised land. The land that we knew and took for granted. Of being able to go out of our homes when we like, go shopping when we like, meeting with friends and being able to hug each other. I'm fortunate that I have Pete here with me, I think it must be very hard for those on their own who don't have any physical contact. And we need to remember all those for whom this lockdown means that they are confined to the home with an abusive partner or challenging children. Whilst most of us are safe in our homes some are confined to a living hell.

Before we were put into lockdown, I wonder what the things were that you were longing for? Were you looking for a new job, a new car, a new house? Maybe you were just frustrated with how your life was and wanted it to be different, to be like someone else's. Maybe you found yourself stressed because you were too busy and didn't have enough time to get all your work done, let alone do anything for fun.

What does that longing look like now?

Do you still long for the same things or has your life taken on a new perspective?

Obviously, some of you have continued working because you either work from home or are one of our extremely valuable key workers. But if you haven't been working, or have been working less - have your priorities changed? I know mine have.

Life will look very different for quite a while and I wonder if it will ever look the way it did before. My hope is that the generosity of spirit and kindness that we have seen in Grayswood over the last few weeks will remain and that our community, whilst already special, will be an even more wonderful place to be a part of.

We will all have been changed in some way or another. I know some people have struggled to connect with God and with the bible during this time, that's understandable.

I felt completely overwhelmed the first 2 weeks with so many emails coming in from the diocese with recommendations, suggestions and ideas, of things to do and things to read. My mind became completely consumed with it all and I had to take a step back and acknowledge that I wouldn't be able to do everything that others were doing. I had to find the right path that would work for us as a community without burning myself to a frazzle and that took time.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us *'Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.'*

Many people are putting their faith and trust in our wonderful NHS now, quite rightly, we are blessed to have it. We, however, have the added advantage of being able to put our faith in a God who loves us and cares for us, despite our questions and our anger. James 4: 8 says *'Draw near to God and He will draw near to you'*.

However hard this has been, and continues to be, the reality remains that today is a day of celebration. We are celebrating the reality that Jesus is alive and reigns with us today and forever, his love for us enduring forever.

Amen