

Dear Friends,

Well we made it to Easter, and hopefully you, like me were able to celebrate in some way, and that the deep truth that death has been swallowed up by the resurrection life is continuing to break through in your walk of life and faith and give you a deep hope.

One of my Easter traditions is to read the poem "Because he is risen by Gerard Kelly", it speaks to me of both the fragility of our human condition here and now and the eternal hope that we have. One stanza goes as follows:

*Because he is risen,  
Healing is on order and assured  
And every disability will bow  
Before the endless dance of his ability  
And my grave too will open  
When my life is restored,  
For this frail and fragile body  
Will not be the final word on my condition  
Because he is risen.*

Because he is risen we can live with hope even in the midst of our fears, and if you read the Gospel accounts of that first Easter Day you will find that fear was the overriding feeling among Jesus followers, that and the fact that they spent much time behind locked doors makes our current predicament and theirs very similar, of course they were afraid of the authorities not a virus, and we are not gathered as they were, but the feelings of die-ease were very real for them as they are for us.

Yet, there is hope, hope for now, and hope for eternity. So, I wonder how the story challenged you this Easter time? Remember it is still Easter! How do we continue to walk with the story as the deep truth of that slowly sinks in?

Ponder these words from the longer ending of Mark's Gospel (The Message Version)

*After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared early on Sunday morning to Mary Magdalene, whom he had delivered from seven demons. She went to his former companions, now weeping and carrying on, and told them. When they heard her report that she had seen him alive and well, they didn't believe her.*

*Later he appeared, but in a different form, to two of them out walking in the countryside. They went back and told the rest, but they weren't believed either.*

*Still later, as the Eleven were eating supper, he appeared and took them to task most severely for their stubborn unbelief, refusing to believe those who had seen him raised up. Then he said, "Go into the world. Go everywhere and announce the Message of God's good news to one and all. (Mark 16: 9-16)*

How hard it was for them to believe! In times of crisis I think we can go one of two ways, we either struggle for faith and struggle to pray, or we cling even tighter to the hope that we have, I guess it is possible for us to find some middle road but suspect it is unlikely. (If I am wrong please forgive me). My experience has

been that people are looking for hope and may well be turning to prayer and to people of faith for answers. In the last few days, I have heard of flowers laid at the foot of some of the crosses that were put outside our buildings, of people being drawn just to stand before the cross to pray or reflect. I have prayed with people in supermarket queues, and had some interesting conversations about the nature of eternity, now I acknowledge that I am in a privileged position and am able to do that, but wonder how we together are sharing the hope that we have, even on our down days.

I know several you are lighting a candle and putting it in the window in the evening, can you encourage your neighbours to do the same? Others are making posters and placing them in windows, everything from notes of thanks to delivery drivers, and refuse collectors, and the NHS, to rainbows with words like hope and love on them, would we dare to take that a step further, and what might that be? Maybe something simple like “I am praying”?

Maybe you can encourage those around you to give, perhaps to support a Local Foodbank or a Voluntary Action Sheffield Group, to write letters to those who are at home alone? We are still the church, and the church is very much alive and well. Keep the faith, for He Is Risen, and in that we continue to hope, for while death may be fearful, in truth it has lost its sting!

I leave you with the final stanza from the poem by Gerard Kelly:

*And because he is risen  
A fire burns in my bones  
And my eyes see possibilities  
And my heart hears hope  
Like a whisper on the wind  
And the song that rises in me  
Will not be silenced  
As life disrupts this shadowed place of death  
Like a butterfly under the skin,  
And death itself runs terrified to hide.  
BECAUSE HE IS RISEN.  
Many blessings*



**Reverend Sally Coleman**

**Co-Superintendent**

**Sheffield Methodist Circuit**