

# Jesus is risen!

Rev'd Peter Balabanski

Easter 2019: John 20.1-18

*Don't hold on to me – go and tell them!*

There's something we haven't done today that we always do at other communion services. We didn't confess our sins to God.

We didn't confess our sins because today we meet the risen Jesus. Jesus is risen, so everything is different. Jesus rising from death to life changes everything and everyone. Mary Magdalene, sadly weeping outside the tomb would have been filled with confusion and sadness. But her world changed, quite literally. The physical presence of her beloved Jesus, risen from death suddenly, utterly changed everything.

Confusion and sadness, guilt and remorse have their place. But not in the presence of the risen Jesus. His resurrection calls for pure joy. So when Mary Magdalene heard her name on the lips of the risen Jesus, she took hold of him – took hold of her beloved flesh and blood teacher; not some sort of apparition or ghost. She seized him; held onto her real, risen Jesus. Confusion, sadness, fear – all utterly swept away in her joy and adoration.

And that's how we can experience the risen Jesus too. He is the one who made us, and who continues to re-make us daily in a miracle of gracious reconciliation. Jesus is worthy of our worship and praise.

A friend asked me what the resurrection was really about. Was it all about this atonement stuff; all about guilt and sacrifice and original sin?' This is a strong tradition in the Christian faith, but I can't see it having centre stage today – the day of resurrection.

The resurrection gospel says to me that the last word is not about guilt and sacrifice; it's about joyful reunion, because the last word belongs to Jesus, not to us. The risen Jesus is the first and the last Word. Not only is *he* beyond the reach of guilt and sacrifice, he calls *us* beyond its reach too. 'It's done and dusted, finished, accomplished', he said. I've dealt with everything. Come with me forever. I love you; I want you with me. The last Word is not about what we do at all, but what God has done in Jesus.

Jesus doesn't wait until we get our lives straightened out. Resurrection is God seizing the initiative; God showing the way beyond struggle, despair and death to the place of new beginning; real new beginning that lets us turn from all that unwanted baggage we left at the Cross on Friday. The party can begin.

This party is a celebration of God coming from eternity through our death to meet us with a new birth: *a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [a new birth] into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [all of us]*. <sup>1 Peter.1.3-4</sup>

The resurrection of Jesus is the meeting place – the collision point where we learn the full extent of God's passion for us. God in Jesus has done something incredible to be at one with us; crashed through into the heavy body of our anxiety, fear and helplessness; crashed through into the body of our mistrust and aggression – and become a part of that body. And because such a mortal body can't possibly contain all the love and goodness and kindness being forced into it, it bursts asunder, and leaves only the new life remaining.

You'd have to think that means death – and it does. But Jesus, out of pure love; God, out of imaginative grace becomes the body which takes that death, and then swallows that death up in new life – in a resurrected body of love and goodness and

kindness. A real one, that is here and now.

The afterlife we expect for ourselves and our loved ones? Maybe we expect something vague and different from what we know now; less fear; less suffering; certainly less guilt and remorse.

The risen Jesus today puts paid to all of that – nonsense he says. Don't wait 'til the afterlife for what is yours this very day. Real life is yours; real life with your God who loves you so much, right here and now, that nothing, not even death can stand in the way. And Jesus, by dying for us and rising again has ensured that our death doesn't have to be our gateway to finding it. New life is ours now; new life is for everyone now.

Can you contain so much love? Can you ever imagine feeling worthy of it? These are irrelevant questions. Along with guilt, remorse and fear, feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness are shoved to one side by the warm, loving friend whom Mary Magdalene was the first to embrace upon his rising again.

That's why we didn't say confession today; because Jesus is risen. Today of all days, we don't dwell on that stuff. He's dealt with all of it. Today of all days, we must know that Jesus loves us just as we are. He didn't wait for us to be perfect before he showed us he loves us to death and way beyond – to that collision point called the resurrection. He is here now; so let's worship him – let's renew our baptismal vows. He is risen; Alleluia!