

## Sermon Easter Sunday 2022

Fr Simon Cuff

I truly understand that God shows no partiality, words from the Acts of Apostles, the 10th chapter, the 34th verse. May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lying in bed, watching the livestream of our Palm Sunday procession and Eucharist was not exactly how I expected my first Holy Week at St Peter's to begin. That my expectations were turned upside down did have some benefits, hearing the sounds of the hymn 'All Glory Laud and Honour' float through my window as the procession entered church was delightful.

Likewise knowing that Fr Nathan was doing a much better job than I would have done at singing the narrator's part in the Passion on Palm Sunday was also an unexpected bonus - for everyone I think I can safely say. Thank you to him and to all those who unexpectedly had to take on last minute services and responsibilities this past week as I recovered from the virus finally catching up with me!

Today we celebrate the Resurrection. Today we celebrate God's ultimate act of faithful frustration of expectations in Christ.

This morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalen rushes to the tomb. She expects to find the tomb sealed, the dead body of Jesus lying in its final resting place after he had been unjustly put to death. When she gets to the tomb, she finds the stone rolled away. She expects the tomb has been raided, and Jesus' body has been stolen. She runs to tell Simon Peter and the beloved disciple. They, perhaps with a hint of misogyny, expect Mary Magdalen to be wrong. They rush to check.

They get to the tomb and find it as Mary said, their expectation frustrated. Peter rushes in, whilst the beloved disciple holds back. They see the body has gone. The grave clothes laid to one side, no longer needed. John's aside here that they still did not understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead, reminds us of God's faithfulness. Just because *our* expectations are frustrated, does not mean that God is not faithful on God's promises, that God has not revealed to us his saving plan for us and for all humanity.

Mary remains, weeping outside of the tomb. She expects Jesus to be dead, she expects his body to have been taken away. She sees two angels in white sitting in the tomb who ask her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'. Not even this angelic vision frustrates her expectations: 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' She turns and sees a figure she does not recognise. She expects him to be the one who has taken away the body of Jesus. 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.'

In a single word, Jesus frustrates all of these expectations: 'Mary'. He calls her by name. He sends her out to tell the other disciples that he is ascending to the Father. Mary Magdalen carries out this apostolic commission. Mary Magdalen, the first apostle, apostle to the apostles, goes and tells the disciples: 'I have seen the Lord'. Countless generations, expecting the ministry of apostles to be limited to men, have found their expectations frustrated in this apostolic commission.

The Resurrection up-ends all of our notions and expectations. Even our expectations of what it means to be human, our very mortality, are overturned. Death is defeated. In our Easter Vigil last night we heard the 4th-century preacher John Chrysostom capture this frustration of expectations: "Hell took a body, and it discovered God. It

took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you, O death, are annihilated! Christ is risen, and the evil ones are cast down! Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life is liberated! Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ, having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and power forever and ever.”

Today and every day God confounds our notions of what life is about and what we might be. He frustrates our expectations and turns our ideas upside down. He does not leave us in this frustration. He meets us. Like Mary Magdalen, he calls us by name. He sends us out for a particular purpose, to find the particular way he is calling you share this Good News in the life of St Peter's and where you live and work. How is God calling you today to share this Good News? The good news that today, Christ is Risen.

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!