

### **Jeremiah 31. 1 – 6**

At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword  
found grace in the wilderness;  
when Israel sought for rest,  
the LORD appeared to him from far away.  
I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.  
Again I will build you, and you shall be built,  
O virgin Israel!  
Again you shall take your tambourines,  
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.  
Again you shall plant vineyards  
on the mountains of Samaria;  
the planters shall plant,  
and shall enjoy the fruit.  
For there shall be a day when sentinels will call  
in the hill country of Ephraim:  
"Come, let us go up to Zion,  
to the LORD our God."

### **Psalms 118. 14-24**

The LORD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.  
There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

"The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;  
the right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly."  
I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

The LORD has punished me severely,  
but he did not give me over to death.  
Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.  
This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

### **Colossians 3. 1-4**

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on

earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

### **John 20. 1-18**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Today is Easter Sunday! Today we stop and recognise the power and love of the Father for the Son in raising him from the dead.

This Easter is radically different from the many we have celebrated in our lives. Whilst the circumstances in which we find ourselves this Easter are radically different we turn once again to the truth of our faith which is unchanging, namely the love of the Father for Jesus the Son in raising him from the dead. I invite you to read the Gospel reading and subsequently reflect on Rowan Williams' sermon written for Easter.

God bless you all!

'Jesus said, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father."

Jesus warns her: he is being taken to a destination more unknown than she could imagine. He is going to the Father. From now on, there will be no truthful way of speaking or thinking about him except as the one who lives alongside the source of all things.

Yet to realise this is to realise that we cannot have Jesus just on our terms. After the resurrection, with its demonstration that Jesus's life is as indestructible as God the Father's life, we can't simply go back to the Jesus who is humanly familiar; and – obviously – we can't have Jesus as a warm memory, a dear departed whose grave we can visit. He is alive and ahead of us, clearing a path to the Father's heart.

Christian faith does not look back to a great teacher and example but forward to where Jesus leads, to that ultimate being-at-home with God which he has brought to life in the history of our world.

Mary Magdalene tries to cling to a Jesus from the past, her past; her first outburst of joy comes from a conviction that the impossible has happened – that history has been reversed. It hasn't. The crucifixion has happened, and both Jesus's friends and

his enemies have made irrevocable decisions in the course of the events around it. Judas and Peter and Pilate will not wake up and find it was all a bad dream. Now in the light of Easter, they have to decide what to do with their sin and compromise, the past that will not go away, the evil and the mistaken good, the fear and the running away. They, with Magdalene, have to learn that the risen Jesus promises a transformation never yet imagined or expected, the possibility of reconciliation and of sharing Jesus's intimacy with the Father. He is ascending to 'my Father and your Father'. At that moment, neither Mary nor anyone else could know what that would mean; she is called on to go with Jesus so as to discover what it is, and to echo that call in her witness to the apostles, summoning them – and so summoning us – to the Father's heart. On that journey, we must travel light, laying aside what one of the desert fathers called the heavy burden of self-justification, and giving up the image of a Jesus who simply assures me of my own image of myself as good and right. From now on, my justification is not that I am proved to have been right all along; it is that Jesus has promised, irrespective of my success or failure, to be there. He assures me not of my innocence but of my forgiveness and my hope. He was raised to life, says Saint Paul, for our justification; he was raised so that we may know his promise to be with us is never defeated by our failures.

God of our life, who for our redemption gave your only Son to death on the cross and by his resurrection has delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of the risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.