

Delighting in God's grace

Notes on the Bible readings

- Matthew's narrative of the resurrection comes at a time of great turbulence for Jesus' followers. Jesus' popularity and number of followers had been growing. He was hailed as the one who would restore Israel, as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, and had entered Jerusalem in triumph; only days later he was tried and put to death on a cross. Excitement turned to grief, hope to fear and joy to disappointment.

- Mary Magdalene and her friend, also called Mary, take a significant role in the story. At a time when women did not have prominent roles in society, the angel, like Jesus, chooses unexpected people to do God's work. Their function in the story is that of witnesses, and, like the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well, they cannot keep their joy to themselves.

- The other readings for today hint at the events that Matthew writes about. Jeremiah anticipates the restoration of all Israel and picks up on the joy and worship that this will result in. In Acts 10, Peter's outline of the Gospel message links our role with that of the two Marys – we too are witnesses, and we are chosen by God. Like them, we should not keep the joy of Christ rising from the dead to ourselves.

To think about or discuss in a group

'It's true I tell you.' The two Marys were witnesses to both Jesus' death and his resurrection. What might they have said to the disciples to convince them that Jesus was/is alive? Write a script for this conversation (and, if in a group - at home or via social media - perform it!).

How might you approach the same task - i.e. convincing people that Jesus is alive - today?

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How does this image speak to you of 'joy'?
- ▶ 'Joy' is not really an everyday word; what does it mean to you?
- ▶ How will you share the joy of Easter, particularly in the current context of self-isolation?



A prayer of adoration

*Risen Lord Jesus, we adore you and praise your name.
Today you defeated death and rose again.
You died on the cross that we might be free.
Thank you, risen Lord, that you did this for us,
so that we might enjoy the freedom of eternal life.
Risen Lord Jesus, we love you, we worship you,
and we adore you. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*God, who brought new hope to the world through resurrection,
we bring before you those who have no joy and no hope,
those who fear the future, who see no light at the end of the
tunnel, those scarred by pain and sadness, or who grieve.*

*We pray for those yet to hear your good news,
whether that is because they live in far-flung places,
or because they are closed to the message and the possibility
of 'What if?'*

*Help us to be Easter people, willing always to share the good
news of hope, restoration and freedom to all those we meet -
neighbours, friends and strangers alike. Help us especially to do
so in this time of crisis.*

We ask this in the name of our risen Lord Jesus. Amen.

A personal prayer

*Thank you, risen Jesus, that you are my Lord and Saviour.
In you I have joy and hope, always. Amen.*

Live your faith

Start a diary of joy this week. Remember, record and share these moments or events with others - e.g. by using social media.