



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
3 Stanmore Bay Road,
Whangaparaoa, Auckland, N.Z.
www.ststephenswgp.org.nz

Sermon

Resurrection Hope

Matthew 28:1-10; Acts 10:34-43

Easter 12th April, 2020

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Do you like HCBs? - Hot Cross Buns to the uninitiated. Helen made a lovely batch this year – I think the best she has ever made and better than any I have had from a shop.

I heard a helpful comment on the symbolism of HCBs this week. They are not only very yummy but they remind us of the events of the Easter period.

The bun is made of bread with raisins which are dried grapes. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave the disciples bread and wine as a remembrance of him.

The bun has a cross on it which reminds us of the cross of Christ where he died for us.

Then there are the spices. Jesus' body was buried with spices.

Finally, the bread of the bun has risen – and Jesus has risen from the grave.

There you have reminders of Communion bread and wine, the cross, the burial and resurrection and all in such a yummy form!

This last week leading up to Easter – Holy Week – we have followed two lines of thought in our services. We had the Passover meal with Helen reading the background story for the children in a series of videos on the church website. That series took us to the evening of the Passover and the freeing of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. I asked Helen to read the gospel today in the same way to connect with what the children experienced through the week.

In the service in the morning on Good Friday I said that the Passover meal was in itself a picture of what Christ would do for all humanity to purchase freedom and forgiveness through his death on the cross.

We also followed a series of short videos about key characters and their responses to the death of Jesus with thoughts about his previous, significant conversations with them.

The disciples had no thought that the resurrection could happen. The crucifixion had appeared to them a disaster with all their hopes crushed. How their minds must have boggled when it started to dawn on them what had really happened. Sometimes we give them little credit for how difficult it would have been to accept. Unbelief, confusion, joy, doubt, tears, bewilderment - what an emotional roller coaster they must have been through!

But make no mistake, this is not a myth. The disciples gave eye witness accounts. They met the risen Jesus in a physical body. As Peter said in the Epistle, "we ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

That is what Jesus had said would happen. We heard it when Peter had the revelation that Jesus was the Messiah.

Matthew 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Just a few days before his death he had told them that he would be crucified.

Matthew 26:2 ² "As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

This is not just a story about a man who died and was revived. Something fundamentally different happened with Jesus. He had said exactly what would happen and he was right. He did rise on the third day. But as Peter also says, the risen Christ told them that he is the judge all people – the living and the dead. Jesus has been given that responsibility by the Father. At the same time, Peter says if you believe in him you receive forgiveness of sins. So he is both the way to be forgiven and the one who judges those who do not reach out for the forgiveness he offers.

The resurrection of Jesus is immense. We are still talking about it these 20 centuries later.

Corona virus may seem big at present. It may appear to be a disaster which will crush all hope for some people - but it will pass. People won't be talking about COVID-19 in 2000 years from now. Jesus' resurrection speaks hope into all parts of our lives. It is not just about one man long ago, it is God's YES to the renewal of creation and of humanity. It is the assurance that sin, corruption, disease and death do not have the last word but that God will raise us up with Christ from the dead. Life beats death. Mercy trumps judgement.

Disease is only in the world because of mankind's sin – Romans 8 spells that out clearly. Creation is out of order because of our rebellion against God.

But the resurrection of Jesus brings hope. Our experience of the world is mixed with grief, insecurity, and weakness. But the redemption of our bodies, our physical resurrection from the dead, is assured because we are connected to Christ, who has been raised as the first fruits of what is to come (1 Cor 15:20–27). His resurrection secures our resurrection. His defeat of death becomes ours.

Coronavirus is a consequence of a world being out of order, just as other diseases are. But God is bigger than all of this. We may struggle with anxiety or loneliness. We may face sickness, grief or financial hardship. For younger people it may be the first test of this sort they have experienced. But when it comes to it - all of us have to face death eventually and our faith in Jesus assures us that he has won for us.

His resurrection is the promise of a renewed world and life eternal. Let's take hold of that hope as we reflect on the resurrection of Jesus this Easter.

With that in mind, I invite you to reaffirm your faith in with the words of the creed.

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