

A Reflection for Easter Sunday



by Revd Sue Strutt

Dear Friends,

You don't need me to tell you that the Resurrection is the central claim of faith for Christians. We are invited to revisit it every Easter and continually state our belief in it as we recite the Creed Sunday after Sunday.

Several different theories of what actually happened have been put forward, ranging from Jesus's body being stolen from the tomb to it being a legendary fiction that caught on. There are certainly variations in the Gospel accounts that can lead to doubts on the reliability of the resurrection story. In this day of having to prove the veracity of everything, it is difficult to believe in miracles. Some scholars believe a naturalistic explanation will always supersede a supernatural one.

But is this a true statement in itself? The hardest, best evidence of the truth is the belief of the disciples that they had encountered the risen Christ.

It was not just the named disciples, many others saw Jesus too, including Mary Magdalene and the two friends on the way to Emmaus. The conversion experience of Paul is also evidence of the risen Christ. He took his life into his hands when he moved from persecuting new Christians to becoming one himself. The growth of the Church did not occur because of a stolen body or a legend that has been passed down through the generations but because of the very real event of the disciples' experience and Paul's encounter with the risen Christ. When we think of the enormity of what happened and the millions of Christians throughout the world, the various theories begin to look a bit silly. Rather than, as detractors would have us believe, we are foolish for believing.

Whatever the scholarly theories, however, faith in Jesus remains a personal and experiential occurrence. It isn't just a miracle that once took place in a borrowed tomb but is a present, hopeful reality that I believe makes sense of the world in which we live. It is God's defiant statement that, in a world full of hate, decay and death, there is a purpose, hope, and life that goes beyond the grave.

But St James is right in his letter to say that faith needs to be worked out in actions (James 2:14–26) in order to mean anything in depth. We are asked to work with trust in the presence of the resurrected Christ in this world of hurt and pain. Many of the first Christians died for their faith; trusting in his hope and promise in the face of persecution is where faith was put into practice. The same is true for those who call themselves Christians today. Let's do it!

Yours in the love of the Risen Christ,

Sue