

## Thought for the Day - Easter Monday to Sunday 19 April by Rev. Bill Church

### Easter Monday – 13 April

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

On the afternoon of the first Easter Day, two very despondent disciples were trudging away from Jerusalem. Were they running away, afraid that the authorities were after them? Or just going home, disappointed that their dream was shattered?

As they walked, they got talking to a stranger (no social distancing needed). And kept talking until evening drew in. They invited the stranger to eat with them.

Only then did they realise it was Jesus.



At once the mood changed.

They were re-energised and hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples that they had recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Everything changed for all of them. Courage replaced fear. Hope replaced despair. From then on, their task and their joy was to tell the world about the risen Jesus.

*Jesus Christ is risen today. Alleluia!  
Our triumphant holy day. Alleluia!  
Who did once upon the cross. Alleluia!  
Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!*

## Tuesday 14 April

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

The crucifixion brought out the best in a few – the women who gathered at the foot of the cross; St John, the only male disciple brave enough to be with them; Nicodemus, who had not been willing to acknowledge Jesus during his life, boldly asking Pilate for his dead body.

But the crucifixion brought out the worst in many more – the spite and self-interest of the Chief Priests; the mob hysteria of the crowd; Pilate abdicating responsibility and decency; the cruelty of Roman rule; betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter, desertion by the disciples.

Our current problems have brought out the worst in a few – the profiteers, the scaremongers, the irresponsibly selfish.

But, heart-warmingly, they have brought out the best in many – health and care workers, those who are keeping basic services running, spontaneous neighbourhood helpers, informal demonstrations of support.



Will it be 'business as usual' in a few months' time, or something better?

*He who bore all pain and loss  
Comfortless upon the cross  
Lives in glory now on high  
Pleads for us and hears our cry.  
Alleluia!*

## Wednesday 15 April

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

We got a nice postcard from one of our grandchildren, saying they were getting bored with staying at home. I am getting bored, too.

My earlier reaction would be to see boredom as a sub-branch of the sin of Sloth, together with procrastination, despair and laziness.



But I read an article in the New Scientist which claimed boredom was a useful evolutionary mechanism. When ancient humans got bored, they were encouraged to try doing something new, and that something might have turned out to be useful.

I see the point. I have been trying new things to cook (no sniggers, please, from real cooks in the congregation).

Have any of them turned out to be useful enough to be repeated?

Wholemeal cheese scones – definitely.

Cherry flan – maybe.

Kimchi – well, let's put that one down to experience.

However much I look forward to real congregations again, there will be things we have learned from Covid-19 which will be useful and worth repeating.

*Teach me my God and King,  
In all things thee to see;  
And what I do in anything  
To do it as for thee.*

*All may of thee partake;*

*Nothing can be so mean  
Which with this tincture "for thy sake"  
Will not grow bright and clean.*

*A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws  
Makes that and the action fine.  
(George Herbert)*

## **Thursday 16 April**

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

William Morris is well-known. He was an inspirational leader in design and furnishing, both domestic and ecclesiastical; and in what would now be called "lifestyle".

Less well-known is his younger sister Isabella Gilmore. She was married and, after being widowed at 40, trained as a nurse in London. In 1886 she was persuaded by the Bishop of Rochester\* to lead a refoundation of the Order of Deaconesses. This she did with devotion and success and (Deaconesses served as what we might now call parish social workers) in seven dioceses.

It was one pointer towards women becoming deacons and then priests and bishops. She retired in 1906 and died in 1923. Our calendar remembers her on this day.



\*The Diocese of Rochester included much of south London and also, until 1877, Hertfordshire.

*Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.*

*Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.  
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the  
Virgin's womb.  
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the  
kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.  
We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.  
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with  
thy precious blood.  
Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.  
(Te Deum)*

## **Friday 17 April**

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

We are entering what gardeners call 'the hungry gap'. Over-wintering crops are finishing and, unless you are lucky enough to have a greenhouse or a polytunnel, new season crops are still a way off.



So, this is a season of much work and little immediate reward – sowing, pricking out, planting out, weeding and not much apparent to show for it.

But we are confident that there will, in time, be a harvest and, once again, we will have fresh vegetables and fruit to delight the eye and satisfy our hunger.

That is a hope based on long experience and regular precedent.

Christian hope is one of the great virtues listed by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. It is not based on the great cycle of the seasons but on faith in Christ. It is a holy expectation like that of Simeon and Anna awaiting in the Temple One who would be a light to lighten the nations and to be the glory of his own people. It is what

must be seized as an anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6) in good times and even more so in bad times.

*'Rejoice in your hope; be patient in tribulation; be constant in prayer'  
(Romans 12. 12)*

## **Saturday 18 April**

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Ingmar Bergman's great film *The Seventh Seal* is set in Sweden at the time of the Black Death. It is apocalyptic – the title refers to Revelation.

In it, the Knight plays chess with Death. When he realises that he cannot save himself, he still delays the game long enough to allow a couple of strolling players – Jof and Mia – to escape with their baby boy (like the Holy Family) and, at the end, their caravan rolls off in summer sunshine.

The storm will pass.

*O God our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast  
And our eternal home.  
(Isaac Watts after Psalm 90)*



**A footnote.** Preachers preach also to themselves and the same with *Thoughts for Day*. It has again reminded how lucky we are – gas, water, electricity, post all working. And, in my case, a garden, good neighbours and nearby walks. Extra prayers needed for those stuck in a one-room flat in a crowded city; or having a houseful of children to be educated and entertained; or worried about jobs and businesses. Bill

## Sunday 19 April

*“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” John 20. 29*

Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus came to the locked house on the evening of the first Easter Day. Thomas asked for solid proof that Jesus really had risen.

A week later he got that proof when Jesus appeared to him as well. Thomas joyfully accepted the proof and acclaimed Jesus as: “My Lord and my God!”

Many others had hailed Jesus as “Lord”. Nobody else anywhere in the gospels called Jesus “my God”.



This great theme of the Christian faith was first voiced by so-called ‘doubting’ Thomas.

It is not wrong to ask questions. It would be wrong to ignore the answers when they come.

Jesus did not scold Thomas but blessed all subsequent Christians, including us, in the words above.

*No more we doubt thee  
Glorious Prince of Life.  
Thine be the glory,  
Risen conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o’er death hast won.*