



Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**4 April 2021
Easter Day
Reflection and Notices**

Reflection

John 20. 1-18

I always think this is such a beautiful story and has been one of my favourite Bible stories since I was a child. After the mixed emotions of Holy Week and the great sadness of Good Friday here in this passage unfolds the mystery of where Jesus has gone and then the first of His appearances to His disciples. We see how they react differently to what they both see and experience and how they come to believe that Jesus has, as He said He would, risen from the dead.

Our Gospel begins with mystery, the scene is set in darkness as Mary Magdalene reaches the tomb and sees that the huge stone has been rolled away. We can only imagine the questions that might have been running through her mind.



Who could have rolled the stone away and why? Are they still inside the tomb? What shall I do? Have they taken Jesus' body away and where?

Fear and panic overcome her and Mary runs off to find Peter and John to tell them that the tomb's large stone has been moved, that Jesus' body is missing and she doesn't know where it has been taken. Having been told of the events by Mary, the two men run in great haste to the tomb to check for themselves. It is John who gets there first. Stooping down he looks inside to see the linen cloths lying there but John does not go inside the tomb. When Peter arrives, he looks and goes into the tomb. He too sees the linen cloths lying there. John joins Peter inside the tomb and then they both leave puzzled not knowing or understanding what they have seen or what it means.

We can understand how these two disciples may have felt. They like many people who hear about the Resurrection for the first time may need time before they can comprehend this amazing story.

Mary Magdalene is left alone we are told weeping; she too is confused but feels she can't leave, something tells her to stay. She goes to look inside the tomb to find two angels sitting where Jesus had lain. They ask why she is weeping. Mary tells them she is crying because someone has taken away Jesus and she doesn't know where. After speaking these words, she turns round to find a man standing in front of her. He asks, "Woman why are you weeping." Mary thinks he is the gardener and replies, "Sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. The man replies, 'Mary'. As her name is spoken Mary replies "Rabbani", meaning teacher and runs to Him.

It is then that Jesus tells Mary to go and tell the disciples that He is to ascend to the Father and here it is important I feel to include the actual words spoken, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'

Like the disciples and Mary we all may pass through stages of belief. We may think the story is made up and impossible to believe. Like Peter, we may check out the facts and still be puzzled about what might have happened. It's only when we encounter Jesus personally that we are able to accept the fact of the Resurrection. Only then, as we commit ourselves to the Risen Lord and devote our lives to serving Him, do we begin to understand fully the reality of Christ's presence with us.

Jesus' resurrection is key to the Christian faith. Just as He said He would, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that He will accomplish all He has promised. Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ is not a false prophet or imposter. He is ruler of God's eternal kingdom. We can also be sure of our own resurrection because Jesus was resurrected. Death is not the end, there is a future life with God. The divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life. It is the Resurrection that is the very basis for the Church's witness to the world.

For all of us gathered together from all our family of churches of St Giles, St Mary's and St Cuthbert's it truly is a day of celebration of the Risen Lord. After the long dark journey of the COVID pandemic, which we have travelled along together, we are at last seeing that bright light of Hope ahead. As we journey on let us not forget to thank God for all He has done for us. Let us rejoice in His constant love and care for each person, unique, and special to God's eye. May we be constantly open to His call of service and love for all his people. Happy Easter to you all may our lives be filled each day with God's Blessing. Amen

Rev'd Abbey

Readings for next week – Sunday 11 April, Easter 2:

Acts 4. 32-35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1.1 – 2.2; John 20. 19-end

Notices

An announcement from the Church Commissioners:

"A Notice giving the objects of proposed pastoral reorganisation affecting our parishes has or will be displayed near the main door and on the Church of England website. This Notice includes the last date by which representations regarding the proposed reorganisation may be made to the Church Commissioners."

The Notice principally relates to the union of the benefice of Saint Giles, Durham and the benefice of Shadforth and Sherburn. The Notice is available to read in full on the Church of England website at www.churchofengland.org/consultation and we will also arrange for printed copies to be available for those who would like one.

APCMs for all three of our churches will take place on **Sunday 25 April**. St Giles will be in church after the 11.00am morning service; St Cuthbert's and St Mary's will be at 4.00pm in St Cuthbert's Church. Where possible, meetings will be zoomed for those unable to attend in person.

Keyholders: we are compiling an up-to-date list of keyholders at St Giles. Please could anyone who holds any keys please ring Sarah in the office: 0191 374 1079 or email stgileschurchdurham@live.co.uk to let her know which keys you hold. Thank you

Just a brief reminder that the Parish Office will be closed until Tuesday 13 April.



HE IS
Risen