

## Sermon 2023 03 31 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

=====

The Hymn to the Risen Christ which we used as our Psalm for today is a delightful canticle – a text taken from a variety of scriptural references and then woven together to give us a short portable summary of some Truth of our Faith.

It reflects the pendulum swing between joy and sorrow that is a mark of the swiftly changing emotions of this Holy Week. We move from the glory of Jesus' entry into the city surrounded by thousands of voices calling for his kingship to thousands of voices calling for his death.

He walked the path from Pilate's headquarters to the place of the skull, and we had front row seats to this act of barbaric cruelty but we could also see, mixed in with it, acts of great generosity and shared pain.

And we weep at his death but find joy, or at least hope in the knowledge of the resurrection.

=====

On Friday we travelled the path of the Stations of the Cross. We saw again a path of great misery and pain, held tightly against two words, "For me!"

Jesus allowed himself to be beaten; to be humiliated; to be beaten; to be forced to carry the heavy, rough hewn, splintery cross for me; he suffered the nails through hands and feet for me; and he suffered death **for me**.

=====

I grew up surrounded a number of orchardist cousins and they hated the first fruits. They would see a tree covered in blossoms slowly turning into fruit; and then suddenly overnight these rich massive first fruits appeared on the trees.

They had to be harvested, or they would drain too much energy from the trees. But they could not be sold because they were too big pass through their grading and packing machines.

They were discarded as only good enough for stock food or offered as pretend generosity to family and friends for they had no commercial value. And I found sweet, overgrown, loose skinned mandarins the sweetest of them all.

The ordinary, the average, the standard sized pieces of the crop were the ones separated out for sale on the local market or exported to land hungry countries that had neither the capacity nor the ability to grow their own.

=====

It used to fascinate me utterly that people would pay substantial amounts for the second crop – the standard, the ordinary, the depleted.

They feasted on the second crop and praised its quality.

But those who feasted on the first crop given away openly and freely were the ones who knew the true richness of the crop.

=====

There are those people who spend a great deal of money on diets or miracle fat reducing products. The cosmetics industry is worth billions. Personal trainers, weight loss centres, gymnasia, boot camps and brutal exercise regimes, liposuction and plastic surgery all improve the outer appearance, but they do nothing to change our inner self.

Because they are all the second fruits, the high priced products which are standardised to work on every occasion.

But inside there is decay, a lack of joy giving flavour, and the constant shackles which are a self-imposed imprisonment so that we can fit in, be judged as attractive and healthy.

=====

For that is what the world expects people to be – self absorbed, important for being important – a social influencer; with outer signs of wealth and beauty so that they may be mobbed by the paparazzi, photographed, talked about, and when they speak people listen.

=====

But for all the photographs in the world and the vapid comments which add nothing to the sum total of knowledge – they remain the product of the second crop.

=====

We are unified with Christ in being part of the first crop. We are mis-shaped. We don't fit the standard machines. There is no market for us because we do not conform to a standard that is recognised by the world.

We do not fit into this world. For we are being changed daily to fit a different set of standards, different rules, different motivations.

For we have wept with Christ. The weapons that pierced him have pierced us also.

Over the last few days, we have walked with Christ. We have suffered with him, we have died with him, and we have risen with him. We have been reborn into this same world, but each time we are reborn, we conform a little to the standards of this world. We are less connected, less interested and no longer find the world as comfortable as it used to be.

=====

For we are part of a different world. A world of constant light. A world of constant life. A world where appearance does not matter. A world of first fruits. A world of embracing unconditional love. A world without death or fear. A world where we are the first fruits. Misshaped, non-standardised, and utterly, utterly content.

=====

### The Hymn to the Risen Christ

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us:  
so let us celebrate the feast,  
Not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness:  
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.  
Christ once raised from the dead dies no more:  
death has no more dominion over him.  
In dying he died to sin once for all:  
in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin:  
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Christ has been raised from the dead:  
the firstfruits of those who sleep.  
For as by one man came death:  
by another has come also resurrection of the dead;  
For as in Adam all die:  
even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

=====