

Easter is about Love

Easter is about love. It is about God's love, and how this love is greater than death, greater than all the evil and wrong in the world.

It is about us sharing in this love through the love we know and share in our daily lives.

We see God's love in Jesus on Good Friday, at his crucifixion. We see it as he gives himself up to die knowing that somehow his death will make the world a better place.

We see it as he prays for the soldiers who are nailing him to the cross, praying that they will be forgiven.

We see it as he hangs from the cross and tells his mother and his closest follower that they are family now and must take care of one another.

We see it as he reaches out to the thief crucified next to him.

God's love, even at this most dreadful moment, is selfless, thinking only of others. It is about forgiveness, generosity, kindness, compassion and gentleness.

And then the extraordinary thing, after his horrifying death, Jesus is alive again, and the love he has shown leading up to his death is the love he shows in his new life.

He is gentle and kind to his followers, who are startled and disorientated to find him alive. He gently helps them come to terms with this new reality of his risen life.

He does not come back with reprisals or judgement on those who had executed him.

Instead he shows the same love, the gentleness, compassion and kindness, the generosity and forgiveness, that he had shown before his death.

Which is the love that we see over and over again at times of celebration and tragedy. Particularly tragedy.

It is the love poured out after the recent Westminster attack, for the families and friends of the victims, for the communities affected, at the funeral of PC Keith Palmer's funeral.

It is the same love poured out to the Coptic Christian victims of the terrorist bombs on Palm Sunday in Egypt. Love from within the Christian community and from Egyptian Muslims and from many others across the world.

This is us, human beings, sharing and showing God's love, which was revealed by Jesus' resurrection as indestructible and mysteriously powerful, overcoming evil and suffering.

We show and share God's love, Jesus' resurrection love, when we choose the same loving way of kindness, gentleness, compassion, generosity and forgiveness.

That is what we are called to as a church, as every baptised Christian, and as every congregation.

Jesus told his disciples on the first Maundy Thursday, after Judas had left the last supper to betray Jesus, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another...By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Our mission is for each one of our congregations to be centres of self-giving love, of kindness, gentleness, compassion, generosity and forgiveness.

And we are able to be such people, such communities, not in our own strength, but because we know God's love ourselves, in our own lives. We are all joyful receivers of God's kindness, gentleness and forgiveness.

So joyfully we can share and show this. There is no room for selfishness, unkindness, resentment, inward-looking, meanness or bickering in the church.

There is no getting around this is how God calls us to live: in the power of the Resurrection, to love one another and for that love to be real and shared.

A flourishing congregation making a difference is a congregation that lives, shows and shares God's love, the love of the Risen Christ, that the world may believe.

A blessed and joyful Easter to you all.