

Dear Friends,

The day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday is Holy Saturday. It is a day of waiting. We spend it with Jesus closed inside a tomb which is sealed by a large and heavy stone. Our present experience may help us to an understanding of this day. The guidance we are being given is to "Stay in." For some of us that comes naturally. We are at home with keeping social distance. It's all the interactions with other people that make us feel uncomfortable. But even those come eventually to miss the contact. It would be good to have the presence of another human body, to feel touch, to see someone's smile and the light in their eyes. We may feel as though we are shut in, with a huge and heavy stone blocking our way out and with no idea of how long it is all going to last.

In Matthew's story of the resurrection, an angel descends from heaven, rolls away the stone and sits on it. I like the idea of the angel making short work of the stone, then dusting off his hands, sitting down and folding his arms. As if to say "You think that old stone can hold Jesus back from rising. No, there's nothing in heaven or on earth, in life or in death that can stop Jesus." Although, the more traditional understanding is that a teacher would sit down to deliver their lessons. The stone which was meant to keep the body of Jesus safely locked up becomes instead a pulpit from which the angel proclaims a message, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised ... He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him."

Sadly, on this Easter Sunday the angel is not going to roll away the stone currently keeping us in our houses. So, we will continue to use our common sense about how best to stay safe and we will also pray for our leaders that they make wise decisions and for scientists as they work on developing a vaccine.

The story of Easter however does give us hope. Life has its sufferings and crucifixions but life too has its risings. The God in whom we trust is a God of resurrections who is working to raise all things from darkness to light, from despair to hope, for death to life. Where there are heavy stones that make us perish God is still rolling them away to bring us to life and to set the whole creation free.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Tony