

Easter 2023 – A sermon inspired by two writers that I love: Sam Wells and Rowan Williams.

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10

Imagine something called 'essence'.

It's outside and beyond our existence. We cannot really understand it. It's made up of three persons in total dynamic relation to one another. We call it 'Trinity'. We can also call it 'God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit'. The Trinity dwells in forever, beyond time and space; and chose to create time, space, matter, shape, life, energy, consciousness. Everything that we call existence.

But the whole purpose of the story was to be in relationship with something, someone outside itself. The whole purpose was that the Trinity could become known and be in relationship with humanity and creation *in person*.

That person was Jesus. Jesus brought all of humanity face to face with God, and God face to face with all of humanity. And humanity rejected him and killed him in the most gruesome manner imaginable.

And this is the crucial moment in the story.

At this point, the Trinity might have abandoned the relationship. Humanity had chosen to reject the one who came in person to proclaim his love and care for all people. Despite the despair of a life without hope in the face of death, humanity used death to turn down the love of God.

And if God, the Trinity, had left it there, there would be nothing, nothing at all to stand against a limited existence, a materialistic life, to stand against greed, injustice, exploitation, and cynicism.

But the Trinity did *not* leave it there. God, the first person, kept the story going, kept the relationship going. God did not reject our humanity, but assumed our humanity, and built on it in Jesus. And when Jesus, the second person, died, he came back to life. And when he had restored relationships with his friends who had panicked and run away, the Holy Spirit, the third person, came to shape all people in the ways Jesus had offered.

And when existence finally comes to an end, not just for each one of us but for all things, Jesus will be there again at the threshold of time and eternity, when we will finally be taken into the wonder of forever.

God, The Trinity, keeps his word, his promise proclaimed by the prophets. And the story of Easter is the incarnation of this promise.

In our Gospel story, the angel says to the women 'Do not be afraid, he is not here, he has risen, just as he said; come and see the place where he lay!'

This message is for all of us. Come and see, not just with your eyes, but with your hearts; come and live what the Christian story is about. It is far from simple, it is full of twists and turns, ups and

downs, doubt and confidence, sorrow and joy. But one thing is sure, and Easter is the perfect illustration of it, it is about Faith, Hope, and Love.

Faith in the midst of confusion: the confusion of the women who come to the tomb. How is that even possible? A violent earthquake, an angel of the Lord rolling the stone and sitting on it, and guards so scared they are like petrified!

But to God, all things are possible. And when we see the impossible, we are in the presence of the Trinity, a love that never lets go of us, who never turns his face away, but holds us in the palm of his hand.

Come and see, the promise fulfilled, God true to his word! And go and proclaim the message of Hope.

In Jesus, we have the Hope of being safe in God's hands after our life of flesh, blood and bones, our life of tears and laughter, of sad moments and great joys is over. We are so much more than we realise, we are precious to God. God loves us so much that he gave his only Son so we would wake up and live our life to the full.

The Love of the Trinity is life-giving, joy-giving. It is not that we loved God, but that *he* loved us *first!* We are seen, known and held, but above all we are *welcomed*. The Trinity kept the relationship going, despite everything humanity did to destroy it. We are the objects of an eternal delight. And if we can let that sink into our minds and hearts, we can really and profoundly open ourselves to joy and *share* it in quiet gratitude and kindness with others.

For Faith, Hope, and Love breathed by the Trinity are all transformative. Mary is transformed from deep sorrow to profound joy. The disciples will be transformed from a fearful bunch to a brave and faithful force to be reckoned with (that's the story we read in the Book of Acts). All who met the risen Christ saw their lives and their reasons for living, completely and deeply transformed. They *lived* the Resurrection.

And we, too, are Resurrection people. We are heirs of the witnesses who met the risen Christ, broke bread with him and proclaimed the good news to the world. And today, like every year and every time we celebrate Easter, we start a new chapter in the life of the Church.

Today, we refresh our faith by hearing again the story of the empty tomb; we renew our sense of hope by running with Mary and putting our trust in Jesus; we reaffirm our awe and praise to the God of love who gathers us in his arms as his precious children.

Easter marks the beginning of a new season, when we sign up for a renewed relationship with the Trinity, a relationship that is wholesome and fruitful and selfless.

It's Easter! Alleluia! We wake up in a whole new way, with the assurance of life eternal from the Trinity that will never abandon us: God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.