

## **“Resurrection” - Easter Sunday**

I have a very strong memory from when I was about seven years old. I was sitting in the back of my father's car and we were driving through Wanstead, past the gates of the City of London cemetery and I shivered with fright. I had imagined myself dead and buried in the ground and it was horrible.

Why do we believe that there is anything after death? Before Christ, the most optimistic view wasn't that optimistic at all. At most, some Jews, Greeks and Romans thought that, perhaps, you lingered as a shade in an underworld, without light, without joy, without purpose. And others in the Ancient World agreed with this epitaph from a gladiator's tomb: 'We are nothing and we were nothing. Reader, consider how mortals so quickly return into nothingness from nothingness.'

And then with a thud, an angel descended from heaven, rolled away the stone and sat on it, legs dangling, and said to the women: 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen.'

And this week a parishioner kindly sent me an article, which reminded its readers what the angel did not say about the resurrection. He did not say, 'The spirit of your master will live on.' He did not say, 'Jesus will live forever in the hearts of those who loved him.' He did not say, 'You should not grieve; the teacher has only fallen asleep.' And the angel did not say, 'He has now gone on to a better place.' Or anything weak or mealy-mouthed like that.

Rather he said to the women, who saw Jesus flogged, crucified and speared through the heart, 'he has risen.' And this is completely different from resuscitation. People technically die all the time and are revived. Christ, however, was stone dead, organs pierced but three days later the disciples could eat with him as he stood before them, risen and glorified, not just alive again but living the infinitely different life of heaven; a life which is our promise.

Words fail me - they cannot describe the resurrection. In a way, the Gospels are mere sketches. To realise the truth of the resurrection look at those who met the Risen Lord and see how their lives were transformed.

We live in Brightlingsea, we live in Wivenhoe, we live in Arlesford, we live in Elmstead Market but because of Jesus' resurrection we shall rise and live a glorified life in Heaven. We are not ambitious enough in our faith. We hope that we shall survive death and be with those we love. But Christ has destroyed death and we shall be with God.

I was only seven, sitting in the back of my father's car. And let's be honest, none of us have to search far to find the seven year old in themselves. Well, go to that deepest place within yourself where you used to be afraid of the dark and couldn't sleep if the wardrobe door was left open and listen to the angel: 'He is not here, for he has risen.' And so will you.