



Passion in Perspective

For our lent course this year we will be following the passion of Christ as told in the Gospel of John while seeking to understand it within the context of the Covid pandemic. We

will look at six aspects of Christs passion; darkness, touch, anxiety, isolation, pain, and re-birth, and look how these aspects manifest themselves within the currant Covid situation

Week Six. Rebirth

Read John Chapter 20, especially paying attention to the following

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ *Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ *Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*

¹⁸ *Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

The resurrection appearances

As Mary stands outside weeping she turns around to see a figure whom she assumes is the gardener. She makes that assumption because she doesn't recognise Jesus. It is only when Jesus speaks and she recognises his voice that she cries out "Teacher!" Whatever happened on that first Easter Sunday it wasn't simply a dead body springing back to life! Jesus' appearance has changed, so much so that Mary fails to recognise him, and neither is he recognised on the Emmaus road! Later in John Jesus "appears" in a locked room and he also seems to make a point of eating while sharing breakfast with the disciples!

The resurrection is a story of “new birth” a “new creation” the “first fruits” of something that is beyond our human comprehension. We must also consider the concept of “Jesus being raised into the reality of God” Jesus is no longer a physical being who walks the earth but has transcended death and through that process has become fully God

New birth is a powerful metaphor that can be applied in various different ways within the context of the Church

- Within mission, as we look for seeds of growth in the Church and Parish following a mission incentive created by the Church
- We may see rebirth in a particular service in Church, or a particular club, home group, etc.. when we had previously considered it had “run its course”
- Within ourselves as we experience a spiritual awakening after a particularly flat period of our Spiritual life. Most of us will at some point have “wilderness experiences,” dry patches of our faith journey where God seems distant

Consider the following

We must be resurrection people. We must believe that out of death can come life. For this to happen, a transitional process has to take place. Something has to come to an end, to die, in order for a new thing to take place. There comes to a point in everything where we must ask the question are we merely running something on a life support system, or do we need that particular something to die off in order for new life to take place? What do we need to let go of within our lives, in

order for a new thing to happen? What indeed is the Church “clinging onto,” what does it need to bring to an end in order for new shoots to appear?

Putting it into context

One of the most devastating aspects of the pandemic is the loss of life, the loss of loved ones! The pain of separation, especially when we have been unable to be with our loved ones at the time of death has been unbearable for many. The Christian Church preaches resurrection, a hope beyond death. This hope is prevalent in John's Gospel. Eternal life replaces the theme of the kingdom of God that runs through the synoptic Gospels. For John, Eternal life can be accessible to anyone who recognises the reality of Jesus!

In everything there must be hope. The hope of new birth, of the resurrected body, of transcending the grave, hope must be part of who we are as resurrection people!

Night Prayer

You may wish to light a candle and have some reflective music playing in the background.

The Ita Compline

Ita, who died in about 570, was abbess of a women's community in Killeedy, County Limerick in Ireland. She ran a school for boys where she taught:

ff

Faith in God with purity of heart; simplicity of life with religion; generosity with love.

Among those schooled by Ita was Brendan, who honoured her as his foster-mother and adviser. The Compline that follows is named after her because of its emphasis on examination of the heart, and the prayers of care and protection for each soul who crosses our path.

*If this Compline is being used in a group setting the * notation indicates a change of reader; words in bold are said all together; words in bold italic are said by each person in turn; and + indicates where you might make the sign of the cross.*

+ (silently)

The Sacred Three

to save

to shield

to surround

the hearth

the home

this night

and every night.

* Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Test me and know my thoughts.

* See if there is any wicked way in me
and lead me in the way everlasting.

O Father, O Son, O Holy Spirit,

forgive me my sins.

**O only-begotten Son of the heavenly Father,
forgive.**

O God who is one,

O God who is true,

**O God who is first,
O God who is one substance,
O God only mighty,
in three Persons, truly merciful,
forgive.**

* O God of life, this night,
O darken not to me Thy light.

* O God of life, this night,
close not Thy gladness to my sight.

* Keep Your people, Lord,
in the arms of Your embrace.
Shelter them under Your wings.

* Be their light in darkness.

Be their hope in distress.

Be their calm in anxiety.

* Be strength in their weakness.

* Be their comfort in pain.

* Be their song in the night.

***In peace will I lie down, for it is You, O Lord,
You alone who makes me to rest secure.***

* Be it on Your own beloved arm,
O God of grace, that I in peace shall awake.

**Be the peace of the Spirit
mine this night.**

**Be the peace of the Son
mine this night.**

**Be the peace of the Father
mine this night.**

**The peace of all peace
be mine this night**

**+ in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

*‘Taken from Evening Prayer from Northumbria Community’s Celtic
Daily Prayer published by Collins.’*

