

2023-04-09 ... 8am Easter Sunday Communion Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Matthew 28: 1 – 10

'From rock bottom to rejoicing'

We're not used to major earthquakes in the UK, but anyone who's spent time in the tropics probably have experienced the earth shaking through a tropical storm. Sailors search for hurricane holes to leave their boat for the season; and we've seen on TV the devastating results of hurricanes in the Caribbean and Central America in recent years. Earthquakes create tsunamis – such as the one in the Indian Ocean in 2004, responsible for around 230,000 deaths. Global warming is also thought to be causing a rise in seismic activity in recent times.

So, perhaps it's no surprise that, at such a seismic event as God overcoming death itself, the very earth is described as shaking. In recent years we've understood how our bodies keep score of traumatic events; our brains and nervous systems are changed, holding traumatic reactions that can be triggered years after the original event.

The very dramatic physicality of this Easter story, full of violence, death, shaking and lightning, reminds us of our cosmic connection with all creation. God is in all the elements of our world: earth, water, wind and fire; body and spirit; life and death. The cycle of life, death and rebirth that we see every day in the progression of seed to flower to fruit to seed again, is played out on a cosmic scale in Jesus' death and resurrection. We see the raw, powerful, destructive and creative forces of creation in all their fierce and terrifying beauty.

Our emotional journey mirrors this dramatic cycle. In just three days, we move from despair through fear to joy; from abandonment to closeness; from emptiness to presence. We can imagine the women crying with grief, transfixed with fear and finally singing with joy, as they clasp Jesus' feet. Was the very earth trembling with joy? Can we still feel that echo, that connection when we experience the love of God in the wild extremes of creation and humanity?

Can we feel the fear and pain of the earth, as we pollute her seas, destroy her forests, poison and slaughter her creatures? As the whole of creation groans and shakes, can we bring the joy of love and rebirth, again and again to each new generation of our world and her people? Can we be resurrection people?

We may shake with fear and sorrow at the destruction and damage we have inflicted on the earth. Today we can also dance with joy that God forgives us even this; that Jesus returns to bring us new life, new hope. As Julian of Norwich reassured us, everything that is created **'endures and ever will endure, because God loves it.'** So, we can go out with joy, celebrating that we share this extraordinary life, with each other, God and all creation.

(Adapted from rootsontheweb.com)