

St Peter's, Mount Park, Ealing
Sunday 9th April 2023
Easter Day

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast!

This is a powerful line from liturgy and scripture but it is quite gruesome. The intimation from the words is that we celebrate by eating the sacrifice. We celebrate by eating Christ. How can we possibly? I know this is not the meaning of the versicle and response but the power of metaphor can create an image in our head which though meant to help us explore the meaning of the words offered; can sometimes leads us to get the wrong end of the stick and then confusion reigns. This association for me comes from my youth but still has echoes.

How can we celebrate though when our Saviour has been sacrificed? His body has been broken for us. What a price he has paid and how on earth can we celebrate? Well of course we have to grapple with the meaning of salvation for us and how it has come about in this story of pathos and pain.

In the Old Testament story of the Passover in Exodus a lamb is sacrificed and eaten by the people of Israel. The blood of that lamb is placed on the lintels of the Israelite homes to indicate the presence of the people of God, thereby ensuring the angle of death passed over them. This act of freedom for the people of Israel set in chain a series of events that resulted in the giving of the law and the route to salvation being set. This was salvation from the actual slavery of the Hebrew people to the Egyptians as well as slavery from sin and death. Over time the law became an obstacle as the people lost sight of God's purpose for it and then the law became the way of death.

For us Jesus comes as a new lamb of God that will take away the sins of the world destroying death for ever. Jesus is lead to the cross as the lamb to slaughter; he comes to bring salvation now no longer to a select few; now to all the world. His death destroys death and brings life everlasting into the world. He comes in the power and love of God who is creator and preserver of all things. The feast we celebrate becomes a celebration of life and end of death. Jesus' sacrifice is both death and life; you can't have one without the other. However, rather than being life followed by death, his is the death of the cross through which the life eternal of the empty tomb is proclaimed.

Why should you celebrate? Because this event is not just for anyone, it is for you. Jesus' sacrifice is yours and mine. He has destroyed death for you and me. We celebrate because the shackles of earthly slavery that have held us have been not just removed they have been thrown off and crushed; we are completely free.

What are we free from? We are free from sin and the threat of sin for we have forgiveness. We are free to proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Saviour; we are free to carry our cross of love and forgiveness. This is a great gift that has been given to us. We simply have to receive it. And today is a fantastic day to do just that; to open our hearts to the Spirit of God and to receive him into our lives today. To receive the risen Lord who proclaims the love of God to all of creation. And to cry from the roof tops "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" for he is risen indeed, Alleluia! So let us therefore celebrate the feast.