

The Right Reverend Michael W. Hawkins Bishop of Saskatchewan

PO Box 23125 Prince Albert Saskatchewan S6V 8A7 (306) 763-2455 bishopmichael@sasktel.net

Easter 2020

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Jesus is alive but Jesus did not come back to life. Our mistaken notions of the resurrection and our misconstruing it for resuscitation are not new. It seems as if Mary Magdalene had some notion when she first saw the Lord that Easter morning that everything could go back to the way it was. Easter was not an undoing of Good Friday, his wounds are still with him, visible in his resurrected body and he has not come back to life. Rather as he says to Mary Magdalene he is going back to his Father, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” This is not something less than resuscitation but something far greater, just as the life of heaven is not less but more real than our life here on earth. We risk sometimes thinking of the risen Lord as a ghost, as not quite as real and alive as he was before, but the fact is that he is so much the more real and alive, with an immortal body, alive never to die again.

Neither Mary nor the disciples recognize Jesus initially, Mary knows him by his voice and call, for his sheep know his voice, and the disciples recognize him by his wounds, for this is who he is now and forever, Christ crucified. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. I am sure part of their joy was to have seen their Master and Friend alive and to have had the confusing reports of an empty tomb and visions cleared up, but when he comes and says Peace be unto you, we need to recall their recent history. Their joy must also have been found in his peaceful advance and goodwill. They speak of survivor guilt which often affects those who live through a disaster or accident while others died. At the least they must have felt this, aside from their own guilt for having deserted and denied him. Their joy and gladness is that this man had seen them all at their very worst, and yet he is still their friend, he still comes to them and speaks Peace to them. This is the joy and gladness of not having to pretend. It is the peaceful joy to know that you are embraced and forgiven and loved at your worst. This is the joy and gladness of the forgiveness of sins and it is to this and for this that Jesus commissions them by the power of the Holy Spirit, to communicate the same to others.

The twin messages of Easter are everlasting life and forgiveness. To Mary is given the news of this new access, his God is our God, his Father is now our Father and there is a way made for us to this life everlasting. To the Apostles, assembled in fear and behind closed doors is given the message of forgiveness, peace be unto you.

The joy and confidence of Easter grows as the disciples share their faith and experience of the risen Lord. Mary Magdalene’s joy is increased by Peter’s and John’s and that of all the eleven, and to this is added the joy of the two who run back to tell of how they knew the Lord in the Scriptures and breaking of bread, then the joy grows as some five hundred come to know the risen Lord, and then James and then Paul, and then you and me! So our Easter joy shall be increased when we again meet together and tell how the risen Lord has made himself known to us.

So, fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

+Michael