



JESUS IS ALIVE!

EASTER GREETINGS FROM CHRIST CHURCH, BANGKOK

“In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1:3-5)

So says St John at the beginning of his Gospel.

Light is a recurring theme in John’s Gospel. It’s there in the first chapter – the one we normally listen to at midnight on Christmas Eve; it’s there when Jesus calls himself “The light of the world”; it’s there when Jesus urges us to live as “children of light”; so it should come as no surprise that John begins his account of the Resurrection by referring to the absence of light.

“Whilst it was still dark”, Mary Magdelene came to the tomb.

The light shines in the darkness.

John talks about the light of God coming into the world, bringing life to all who believe in him. No amount of darkness can overcome this light. So when the Resurrection story begins “in the dark”, I think John is talking about more than mere physical darkness.

Mary was there through the darkest times. She had watched Jesus die: horribly, brutally, as a criminal. All the male disciples, excepting John himself, ran off and hid. Mary stuck it out – to the bitter death. The crucifixion is about as dark as it gets. And when she comes to the tomb in the early morning, it is still dark. Mary is still deep in grief and shock. The sun could have been shining brightly... but for Mary that would have made no difference. For her it was dark, dark, dark. She had lost her Lord.

But John wants to tell us more than that Mary has had a bad weekend. His theme is that Jesus is the light of the world, and no amount of darkness can snuff that light out. What he wants to tell us is how Mary came through the darkness to discover a new hope. She comes back into the light, and things will never be the same again!

The resurrection happened sometime in the night...whilst it was still dark... and nobody knew about it until Mary went and looked.

So Mary went to the tomb whilst it was still dark. Despite her terrible grief and fear, despite her sense of loss and the hopelessness of her journey, she got up and she did something. She went to the last place where she knew Jesus had been. Even though it was just his tomb and she knew he was dead...she had to go and be there herself. She needed to be where Jesus was to give her comfort in the darkness.

Mary shows us what faithfulness in the darkness looks like. When our prayers seem to hit the ceiling and fall back down on our heads, we pray anyway. When we read the Bible and it just seems to be words on a page, we read anyway. When church feels as if we're just going through the motions, we go anyway. We go to the tomb...to the place where we last saw him...whilst it is still dark.

Everyone passes through dark times, and being a follower of Jesus doesn't exempt us from the dark moments of life. When we can't see what's going on around us because there's too much grief and pain and doubt, that may well be when we feel tempted to ditch God... to believe that God is never going to do anything to help us, to believe that God simply doesn't care about what happens to us. It's easy to pull the covers over our heads and give up.

But then, the light burst out!

Then comes that time when we discover that God has been at work...even in the darkness. Things are different. The tomb that Mary expected to stink with rotting flesh has been swept clean. The grave clothes are neatly folded. Panic...what's happened? Is something even worse adding to our misery? Even in death – they couldn't leave his body alone. But Mary is not afraid of the dark. She's determined that she will find Jesus. And in her faithfulness, the scene shifts. She turns around and there is someone else...the gardener maybe...but as the gardener speaks her name, the light dawns and she can finally see. It's Jesus! He really is alive! Tears vanish. Her prayers are answered; she goes out in joy as the first evangelist – the Apostle to the Apostles - to tell the others the good news.

And it all happened because Mary was faithful even whilst it was still dark. No matter how bleak and impossible the situation looked, she went back to be with Jesus. Even when he wasn't there, she stayed, unwilling to take his absence as an answer.

And Easter dawned.

The resurrection had already happened in the night. But the reality of the resurrection didn't make the slightest difference to Mary's grief until she screwed up the courage to go out into the darkness and face whatever might be there.

Christian life can be like that. We meet Jesus at some point...we enjoy life with him...the healing, the teaching, the acceptance of us, just as we are. But there comes a time when it all seems to go up in smoke. And we question. Our spiritual lives run dry. There's no point, we think. It's over. He wasn't what I thought he was. He can't save me after all...he couldn't even save himself. Darkness descends.

In those times, when we feel that God is distant, remote, when we wonder whether our faith is all just a delusion, never forget the witness of Mary: "he is her Lord, dead or alive". So if a tomb is where I must go to be with him, then that's where I'll go. And as you go and weep... then, out of the darkness... someone calls your name. And you know it... you know the voice. He is alive! The stone is rolled away. The dawn has come.

*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has **not** overcome it.*

The darkness cannot overcome it. In the battle between light and darkness, light will always win.

*Life and light to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.*

These words may come from a Christmas carol, but how well they express our Easter hope!

The experience of Easter comes from being faithful when it is dark. Thomas heard the news, but there was no Easter for him. He didn't believe it. He didn't believe that the darkness could not overcome the light. Easter didn't come for Thomas until a week later when Jesus showed up and allowed him to stick his fingers in his wounds. Only then does Thomas acknowledge the reality of Easter.

What about you? Is it still dark in your life? Dark times come to everyone...even to Jesus. Darkness is not a sign that you have no faith. Darkness is the opportunity to show your faith, just like Mary did. Darkness is the time to get up and face those fears head on...to go to the tomb. It is the time to recognize that Easter happened in the dark.

When everybody was depressed and thought the work of God was just a sham, God was doing the greatest work of all.

So don't be afraid; go to the tomb. It's empty! Jesus is alive, and if you are prepared to listen, he will speak your name. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. What about you? The resurrection happened. The stone is rolled away. The darkness has vanished.

Welcome the risen Lord Jesus into your life!

"O come to my heart Lord Jesus. There is room in my heart for you."

Revd Tim Eady

News from Christ Church

A Note from Tim, our Interim Vicar

I wish you a joyful, hopeful, and light-filled Easter. Amazing that it may seem, but only two of my nine months as interim vicar at Christ Church remain. It has been an enormous joy to come back, and I thank the church for welcoming me and receiving me. I have sought to make the work of deepening discipleship my priority whilst here and pray that Christ Church will grow and prosper in the years ahead.

Best wishes to you. It has been lovely to reconnect with so many old friends, whilst Julie and I have been back in Bangkok.

Tim and Julie

We are delighted to report that our next “interim vicar” will be the Revd Daryl Fenton, who will be arriving in mid-June for a few months. He is no stranger to Christ Church, having been here whilst he was the SE Asia Mission Coordinator for the Anglican Church of North America. More recently, he has been Executive Director of the Church’s Mission to the Jews and has lived in Jerusalem for six years. He brings a wealth of experience from around the world and will undoubtedly be a great blessing to Christ Church.

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Growing in Discipleship:

Discipleship is a life-long process, and we all need to be learning, and growing in our faith. During May, when all the activities around Easter and Confirmation weekends are over, we propose to hold a short series based upon Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: Life in Christ. We will meet on Sundays, after morning services, beginning with lunch (rather like the Alpha Course), and will also hold a mid-week session, on a Wednesday evening. Everyone is warmly encouraged to attend, and whilst it will be perfectly OK to just “turn up”, we encourage you to sign up, just to help the caterers, and so I can prepare roughly the right amount of teaching materials. Please email the church office if you intend to join the course.

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News of the Church Building

And news about the church building: major restoration work needs to be completed over the next 10 years. Christ Church is looking at a 100-Million Baht project to do all that is needed to underpin the building, repair the cracks in the walls, restore the roof and gutters and so ensure that the building will stand as a Christian witness in Bangkok for another 120 years. More updates will be released very soon, as an appeal is soon to be launched.

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And talking of church buildings, in early May, we will be rejoicing with the Anglican Church in Thailand as we mark the completion and consecration of their new church and compound at Lat Krabang, following a ten-year building project. We rejoice to see how God is at work in Thailand. The Thai Church is growing.

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Day of Prayer

A Day of Prayer for the work and ministry of Christ Church will be held on Saturday 16th May. Please join us in prayer, as we seek to listen to God for His guidance in our future thinking and planning. Prayer pointers will be available online – on the website and Facebook page, and the 24 hours of prayer will begin at 10am (Bangkok time), with a Zoom Prayer Meeting. You are invited to join. Details will be published in plenty of time.