

WEEPING AND REJOICING - EASTER'S ECHO

On the front cover of this month's magazine is a picture of the new banner for the Remembrance and Prayer Corner. It was designed by Jean Line, who, in the early weeks of grief for her husband Arthur, found the following words an inspiration:

Weeping may last for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning

Jean wrote: "The words on the banner are from Psalm 30 verse 5, which I found on a tract in a little church near the beach at Brean just a week after Arthur's funeral. The words have given me hope and I wanted to pass on that hope to others."

These two short phrases represent something of the experience of Easter. In turn, if you were to talk to almost anyone about their experience of grief and joy you will find echoes of Easter.

Weeping may last for a night:

As Jesus hung on the cross he was surrounded by darkness. It was a darkness that was unnatural, for it happened between noon and three o'clock in the afternoon. As his friends, mainly the women, looked on - and in particular Mary, as she watched helplessly for her son - how the tears would have flowed. Tears of sorrow and love. Tears of bewilderment and lost-ness. Tears of bitterness and rage? Tears of helplessness.

Everything must have seemed bleak, empty, hopeless to them then in those dark days before Easter Sunday. Thirty-six hours later we find Mary Magdalene still weeping. She is not at the site of Jesus' death but rather in the graveyard. This time her tears sting even more because she is not only crying for the loss of a life, she is now crying for the loss of a body.

But rejoicing comes in the morning:

And then there is that most tender and amazing of scenes as the sun rises: Mary is brought out of her tears by one word - Jesus calling her name. And so she races off to tell the others... "I have seen the Lord." (read it all in John 20.10-18).

So that's the bible's account. What about us and our experience of the cross and resurrection, tears and joy?

Some people seem to think that we should live our lives constantly and unbearably cheerful, what ever befalls us - as if the resurrection happened without the tears of the cross.

Others seem to think we should mope around with the look of someone who has just sucked on a lemon (I heard that wonderfully expressive description as I sat in a waiting room this week, when an elderly gent with a stoop and obviously in some pain made everyone crease up with laughter as he held fourth about the importance of humour in adversity - humour made all the more poignant by his own obvious adversity). To live life with that sort of grim sourness is to live as if the cross happens without the resurrection.

In fact, as we may know, there is hope in our tears because whatever it is that we experience of the 'night' in our lives, Jesus has been there too. This is the good news of the cross of Christ. No matter how far we sink, when we hit rock bottom, Christ is there too.

And there is hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ because his once-and-for-all defeat of death is the surest sign that night will be followed by dawn's glorious arrival.

Jean chose those words for the banner because they brought them hope and wanted to pass them on. They are words that are real of our experience and the experience of Easter. They are words that don't hide from the cross - where all our self-sufficiency and false securities are nailed. But they are words that are not afraid to speak of the deep hope of Easter too.

So today, after you have read this magazine, what tear-soaked joy are you going to pass on to another? Are you willing to take a step of courage and pass on hope through words or, better still, actions today? If you are you are entering into the mystery of the risen life of Jesus. And try not to suck on any lemons!

Paul

