

**Not just in this Season of Easter but each Sunday as we gather to worship we remember that it was on this first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. However, during the Easter season each morning, the words of the Common Worship office call to mind that Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection is the bed rock of our Christian faith. "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: so let us celebrate the feast, not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness: but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."** *1Corinthians 5 v7b-8*

**“Christ once raised from the dead dies no more: death has no more dominion over him.”** *Romans 6 v 9*

Here in lies our hope, for St Paul reassures us that “When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”” *1 Corinthians 15 v 54*

Today’s reading from the first letter of Peter follows on the theme of the previous few verses that, Christ by his death and resurrection brings to those who believe in him, a new life. The old life is to be put away and a new life begins but it is important to remember that one can only react

appropriately to the new life by turning our backs on the old one. Our old values and ways of living need to be replaced by the principles of our new life in Christ, and as part of God's family.

As Christians we are to be faithful to our calling. Our lives should be lived in reverence, because, the cost of this new life is the life and death of Christ. John in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of his Gospel set this out in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. "God loves us so much that He sent his only Son to die and rise again for us that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life".

So, through Christ's atoning sacrifice we are born anew not of flesh but of God.

Our redemption is not through earthly perishable things like gold or silver, however precious they may seem in worldly terms, but by the precious blood of Christ. And the good news is that our salvation will not disappear or decline like earthly possessions.

However, we do need to remember that material things and everyday situations can get in the way of our Going Deeper into God. This world is full of temptations which can draw us away from faithfulness to our commitment to Christ.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world”

This may mean that we feel threatened and out of place by the culture and behaviour of those around us who's lives are influenced by ethics which are at variance with the Christian way of life and its often hard to resist the temptations which mar and damage God's image in us.

Sometimes it is good to stop and be still and ponder what things in our lives are masking the presence of God and preventing us seeing the hidden treasure of the Kingdom.

We need to remember that God does not change, his constancy and steadfast love are unwavering; it is our attitudes and way of living which have the danger of masking our perception of Him and prevent us becoming more Christ like.

We are called to live a Christ filled life. A life of reverence having an awareness that we are always in the presence of God.

The thing is that we have to live it in this world for the time allotted to us, but we are to continue to live for Christ even as we live temporally in a place to which we feel we no longer belong, with the assurance that life in this world is lived in the shadow of eternity, for the Christian pilgrim is journeying to God. And we do not walk it alone for God is always there.

This first letter of Peter which we are considering this morning, reminds us that there will be a day of reckoning.

He says, “since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially God our father is also our impartial judge”.

It is not fashionable to preach about judgement The fire and brimstone preachers of the Victorian era are, on the whole, a thing of the past, but Jesus tells us we will be judged at the last times.

Yes, there will be a judgement, but it will not be on worldly terms but by our infinitely merciful loving God in the light of His Son’s death on the cross. We need therefore “to recognise with humility that we all stand condemned were it not for the amazing merciful love of God which has set us free.” *Sears.*

We are set free to worship and to love the God who first loved us.

As I read this passage through before beginning my preparation for today verse 22 leapt out at me.

“Love one another deeply from the heart”

I cannot read this verse without recalling the anthem sung by the choir in the church where I worshiped as a young woman. The words I’m more familiar with, of course, were those of the King James Authorised Version which were set to music by Samuel Wesley “Love one another with a pure heart fervently see that ye love one another”



These words are but a small section sung by a solo treble voice in the middle of a much longer Easter Anthem based on the words of this first chapter of Peter's first letter.

Do listen to it when you get home, there are many versions on YouTube, and as you do, ponder the words, and their meaning for your new life in Christ and your commitment to grow deeper into God's love for all eternity.

Living God,  
draw us deeper into your love;  
Jesus our Lord,  
send us to care and serve;

Holy Spirit,  
make us heralds of good news.  
Stir us, strengthen us,  
teach and inspire us  
to live your love  
with generosity and joy,  
imagination and courage;  
for the sake of your world  
and in the name of Jesus,  
Amen.

