

Dean's Letter, 21 April 2019, Easter Day

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

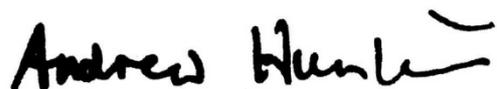
In the Bible, there are a number of times when God delivers the people of God from death and disaster, and when what seems to be impossible, actually happens.

Three of these occasions become fixed in the faith memory of the people of God as central to their existence: the exodus and escape from Egypt, with all the attendant miracles of the plagues that struck Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea (the story is in the book Exodus, and is commemorated at the Passover); the deliverance of the Jews from the power of the evil man Haman through the courage and faith of Queen Esther (and that story is found in the book Esther, and is commemorated every year by the Jewish festival of Purim); and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead – which we celebrate with joy and thanksgiving today, Easter Day.

We gather today with Good Friday behind us: the experience of death and despair and disaster, the end of hope, the end of a dream, the stark horror of the cross of Christ. Now we are with the disciples, including the women, at the tomb of Jesus, and to our astonishment and theirs, we find that the tomb is empty. The body of Jesus is not there. Guarded as the tomb was, made secure at the command of the Roman authorities, it is simply not possible that the body of Jesus has been stolen. Instead, we are faced with the only possible answer: that Jesus has risen from the dead. And then, with Mary, we encounter the risen Christ in the garden. At first, she does not recognise him, and it is only when he speaks to her that she understands who it is who is speaking. She is among the first to believe, closely followed by the disciples John and Peter. It is their witness that becomes the witness and testimony of the early church, and is our testimony today.

So what does this mean? It means that the worst that can be thrown at us cannot destroy us. The cross and empty tomb of Christ means that Jesus has defeated the power of sin and evil and death; that in the faith of Christ we can face death and loss, with the sure and certain hope that death does not have the last word; we are joined with him in his death and will be united with him in his resurrection (Romans 6:5); the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us (Romans 8:11); we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more will we be saved by his life (Romans 5:10). We have been set free. The death and resurrection of Christ is God's act of salvation for us, bringing us out of darkness into light, from the death of sin into the life and light of righteousness. As we gather for worship on Easter Day, we are joined afresh with this great act of God. And as we renew our baptismal promises, we take the risen life of Christ into our lives and with us into all that lies ahead: into the tragedy of Mozambique; into the elections that are being held next month; into the difficult anniversary of the 1819 Battle of Grahamstown tomorrow (22 April); into personal joys and sorrows.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.