



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Healing Eucharist 15th April

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

I was reminded last week of that wonderful film *The Sound of Music*.

It may not be exactly sophisticated,

but that film is definitely one of my favourites.

It ends with the Von Trapp family fleeing the Nazi occupation of Austria by walking through the Alps to freedom, to the strains of 'Climb every mountain'.

It's a strange end to a film that moves from confinement in a convent,

to a busy family life and love, but ends rather abruptly with a journey,

the end of which is uncertain. But my mind wandered to that film

as I pondered today's account from the gospel of Luke. That wonderful account of a journey, on the Road to Emmaus. A journey which becomes a revelation.

Much of Luke's gospel involves journeys.

Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem, the Good Samaritan is on a journey, when he comes across the man beaten by thieves,

Jesus journeys to Jerusalem to arrest and death.

Luke takes this further in Acts when St Paul

has a traumatic but ultimately revelatory journey on the road to Damascus.

Things seem to happen when we journey, when we're on the move.

Our eyes are opened, the rhythm of our walking and the changing scene helps our mind to process, explore, imagine, encounter the divine.

Maybe that is why pilgrimage is becoming so popular these days.

The Lent and Holy Week we have just kept,

has been a very strange and disorientating journey. It has been full of fear, a drawing in, a constricting experience

which has meant that our actual physical journeying has been severely limited to the one bit of exercise a day and the walk round the supermarket,

for those who could go out. Our Lenten journey this year has been a more inward, psychological, emotional and spiritual one.

Jesus disciples, walking away from Jerusalem towards Emmaus were also taking a disorientating, miserable journey.

Their Lord had been crucified, no one knew what was happening, everything they were hoping for had been extinguished, cancelled. Like us, they felt alone.

It was difficult to recognise Jesus as they travelled along. Maybe they were feeling the trauma, the grief, the anxiety that many people are experiencing at the moment.

There was no real hope in sight, Jesus' body had gone missing, that seemed like the last straw. What they didn't realise immediately was that Jesus was alive. The bruised, bloody, tortured, well and truly dead Jesus was here walking along the road.

What was it that opened their eyes? Scripture. Explanation. Proclamation.

Companionship. And then the most obviously Jesus like thing that was the dead give away. Sacrament. When he broke the bread.

We will have to wait before joining together in church to break the bread together.

That's painful, especially at Easter. But what we celebrate this week

is that good is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, light is stronger than darkness,

through him who loves us.

life is stronger than death. Victory is ours,

despair.

And hope is stronger than

God shows

through the death and resurrection of Jesus,

that

he can always bring hope and good out of any situation, however dark it seems.

We will emerge from this time. Maybe more appreciative of each other,

of our church community, of our family and friends, of the eucharist, of our NHS,

of the beautiful world that God has created, of life itself.

You may heard last week the interview with a lovely man,

Hylton Murray Philipson, who recovered from a very nasty bout of Covid 19

during which he nearly died. It changed him profoundly,

he was ecstatic about having a shave and a piece of toast and marmalade.

Ordinary things became extraordinary. Just as a meal with an unexpected guest

became extraordinary in Emmaus. During his time on ICU

Hylton had a vision of Jesus calming the storm and was conscious of people praying for him.

Those of us who make it through will I hope be changed profoundly as he was.

It is my prayer for all who are watching this, that this Easter, strange as it is,

will give us a deeper sense of the risen Lord walking beside us.

This disconcerting journey continues for who knows how long,
but as Her Majesty said recently 'better days will return, we will be with our friends
again, we will be with our families again, we will meet again.
And we will share the Lord's supper again, just as they did in Emmaus. But until
then, Jesus walks along the road with us, our constant companion
who has defeated death.

Alleluia Christ is risen!