

# **Christ at both ends of the line**

**Mark 16: 15 - 18**

**Easter 2011  
24 April 2011**

**Very Revd Peter Beck  
Dean of Christchurch**

**Cathedral worship at Christ's College Chapel**



**ChristChurch Cathedral**



PO Box 855 Christchurch New Zealand | Tel +64 3 3660046 | Fax +64 3 3668452  
admin@christchurchcathedral.co.nz | www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz



Earlier this week when I was meeting with Bishop Victoria she asked me ‘how is Holy Week going for you?’ My flippant response was ‘What Holy Week’. There is so much going on, one task after the other, one more person to talk with, to comfort, to be inspired by, one more meeting to talk about how we will all go about rebuilding the city, make sure that Christchurch people are the ones who have the formative vision for our future, fund-raising to restore the faith of Canterbury, what next for the Cathedral, responding to too many emails and texts telling me what we should be doing, how are we going about doing our bit to help the eastern parishes and suburbs, being comforted by the wonderful staunch commitment and faithfulness of the Cathedral Regulars and volunteers and the staff team, making decision that are often aren’t necessarily the right ones, and then balancing that with home and family, sometime with friends, emptying the composting loo, swimming and sleep. Stressful times. ‘What Holy Week?’

But I knew as soon as I said it to the Bishop, I didn’t mean it. Holy Week, especially Good Friday and Easter Day have been our daily experience if we have but eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts with skill to listen. You see, the drama of the last week of Jesus’ life culminating in his triumphant victory over death and hate was not only a series of events that happened over 2000 years ago. They reveal and demonstrate the very nature of God’s engagement with us from the beginning, the reality of what is happening all the time in and around us. We think of time as linear – one thing follows after the other. But for me, Good Friday and Easter Day are all wrapped up together. In the midst of pain and suffering, of all the terrible things we can do to one another, of all that is happening to the people of our city and its people now, is the presence of the crucified and risen Christ. Always new life breaking open locked tombs of our hearts and mind. ‘Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief’ – these last weeks have certainly deepened my trust and faith in this God of love who is closer to us than we are to ourselves, whether we know it or not.

The planet does what it does. Life is full of joy and delight, of pain and anxiety. In every moment of our existence there is the presence of God, the spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, more natural than breathing. Whatever happens to us in life, it is in the way in which we choose to respond in heart and mind that we find ourselves living or not in the rhythm of the saving love and grace of God. God will not stop striving with us. God’s love will never let us go...never, never, never.

I really like Mark’s gospel. It is often so straight and to the point. And no more here than in his account of the resurrection. The four gospel writers put their

own particular twist on the drama, but all have a common theme. Jesus is raised from the dead. It is the ultimate demonstration of the nature of God's love for us and for the whole of creation – all that separates and injures and destroys is overcome by all that unites and heals and creates. And the disciples confused and frightened by it all, huddle away in their upper room.

Mark tells us this way. Jesus has been crucified, and the disciples are frightened, bereft and immobilised, locked away for fear. Jesus is raised from the dead. The angels tell Mary at the empty tomb that none of them should be surprised. Come on you guys, don't you remember what he said and promised – the reality is that life is stronger than death, love is stronger than hate. You won't find him here; he has gone ahead of you to Galilee to get on with his work. There you will find him. You see he is alive, his dynamic love and thirst for justice and integrity for all has gone ahead, is leading you to Galilee, the symbol for the Galilee of the gentiles, the world, the city, the eastern and the western suburbs. Life and love are not locked away in some closed sanctuary. They are out there in the nitty gritty of the world, consuming and consumed in life, in all its abundance. That's where we need to seek out Jesus, and share in his work. Yet the disciples are frightened, bereft and immobilised.

Jesus appears to Mary and to others, but the fledgling apostles won't believe it. Then he appears to them and he berates them for their lack of faith and their stubbornness.

And then he inspires them – 'go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.'

This Holy Week, just like every week, every day, is filled with the presence of the risen Christ, making all things new. And in the darkest of times, we Christians look expectantly and with hope seeking to see and share in God's creative work. There are times over these last weeks when I am just bowled over and point to what I see as God in action in and through the care, the compassion and courage I have seen in so many people. 'wow just look at that!'

But it can't be all action. It can't always be doing the next thing. And I think that's where my response to the Bishop came from. 'What Holy Week?' What time I have given myself to stop, to pause, to reflect, and to deeply engage with God in the silence of prayer. To wait on God, stilling the chatter in my head. To be still in the presence of God. And I realise that I am bereft of my spiritual reflecting place, in the Cathedral just down the road here. And I haven't allowed

myself to be washed in the regular spiritual exercises which are mine and which are the church's ongoing rhythm of life-restoring prayer which have been part of my priestly life for nearly 40 years.

We need to be in Galilee, witnessing to the risen Christ and sharing the Gospel which transforms society. And we need to have times in our spiritual Jerusalem, times in church or at home when we are fed by the sacraments and by times of pause. Put your mind into your heart and stand in the presence of God all day, says Mother Julian. Be still and know that I am God, or as Thomas Merton would say - be empty and know that I am God. Out of a life rooted in prayer and the sacraments, we can dare and dare and dare until we die.

Since September and now February we have seen the actions of God as we have been remembering and restoring the memory of community. It is the community of grace which we the church stand for and seek to live out. And again today is our opportunity and our challenge to immerse ourselves in the life of the world around us, keeping firmly rooted in a life of prayer, keeping our eyes on Jesus, who as Paul tells us is running this race with us, our companion and inspiration and friend along the way.

There are many unknowns ahead of us here in this city and church. But we can be quite assured that whatever life may deal out to us, the victory is won, and we will constantly be looking for the new life in Christ which is constantly emerging and wanting our contribution. There are many dangers and traps ahead. The journey is perilous, and it will be easy to become frightened, feel bereft, and be immobilised. But in this Christian faith is an energy and a purpose which is no more nor less than the life-giving love of God, and nothing, nothing can separate us from that love, nor daunt us in our task of 'proclaiming the good news to the whole creation'.

So, come to this table,  
you who have much faith and  
you who would like to have more;  
you who have been to this sacrament often,  
and you who have not been for a long time;  
you who have tried to follow Jesus,  
and you who feel you have failed.  
Come.

So Happy Easter, Christ is risen.