

Dear Friends,

This month sees the most solemn and also most joyful moments in our Christian year. It is an emotional journey as we walk with Jesus through the final weeks and days of his earthly life. If you have never sat down and read the Bible in large chunks, let me encourage you to do so in preparation for Good Friday this year. Choose a Gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John and read from the Last Supper through to the death and burial of Jesus. Listen again as Jesus breaks bread and promises a new time gained for us through his death. Walk with him to Gethsemane and, as Jesus goes a little way off to pray we ask ourselves if we, too, would have fallen asleep like the disciples. Then hear the shouts of the crowd as Jesus is betrayed and arrested. Imagine how fearful we would be to be arrested and dragged off to a kangaroo court, tortured and bullied by soldiers and, ultimately hear the death sentence just for having loved and obeyed God completely.

The walk to the cross challenges all of us in our comfort and complacency. Jesus, going to the place of execution and still asking that his tormentors be forgiven. His words of comfort from the cross to the penitent sinner and his concern for his mother and best friend John, echo down the years. As we bring our pain and sin to the cross so we find there a kindly and compassionate friend. As we experience loss and pain in our lives so we are reassured that the Lord of all, Jesus, knows and has experienced the range of human pain and grief.

As Jesus is laid in the tomb we know that God has taken on death. He hasn't stood far off and abandoned us to its sadness and separation. He has entered into death and carried our sin so that we can live his resurrection life.

As we read on in the story so beyond the numbness and pain of Holy Saturday there is the unimaginable excitement and surprise of Easter morning. How can it be that Jesus is alive? How can it be that death has been beaten? How can it be that we can share his risen life?

In Jesus God has shared our death so that we can share his life. We can experience eternal life not just when we die, but in a living relationship with him every day.

Even if you don't normally come to church, how about coming this Easter? Our services are noted in the magazine. Come and share in this great story of God's son dying our death so we can share his life. Come and worship the God who is compassionate and generous, forgiving and self giving. And, if faith is hard and life feels weary, come asking God to renew you with his resurrection life and joy.

*For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only son, so that all who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3.16*

May you know God's love and kindness throughout this special time of year,

Louise.