

Thought for the Day

Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Tuesday 14th April

Easter Tuesday and the Cathedral's 900th anniversary

John 20.11-18

Today is the date on which the foundation stone of the Normal Cathedral was laid in the time of Bishop Urban, so it is our 900th birthday. Sadly we have had to cancel many of the events planned to celebrate our 900th because of the pandemic, and a year which was to be full of celebrations has taken a most unexpected turn.

As we mourn the locked Cathedral and loss of corporate worship, sometimes people say 'it's the worst time of year for this to happen' – meaning, it's awful that we can't celebrate Easter together. That's very true - and yet in another sense you could say it's the best time of year for this to happen. I can't help seeing some parallels between our situation and that first Easter. The locked dark Cathedral evokes the tomb, sealed by the stone, dark and cold. A symbol of sorrow and loss. But very much not the end of the story.

Today's gospel passage tells how Mary went to lay the spices, found the tomb deserted, broken open and empty, and weeping harder than ever as this really seemed the last straw, she turned and there was the Lord. Not in the tomb, but in the garden. With her after all. Not sealed up, dead and buried. But unaccountably alive, and she ran to tell the others, '*I have seen the Lord*'.

Our Cathedral will open again and there will be great rejoicing and celebration and thanksgiving. We will worship with overflowing hearts together. It will be a kind of resurrection. Meanwhile, where is the Lord?

That risen life cannot be locked up. It is actually uncontrollable! Kill him on a cross? He defeats death. Seal him in a tomb? He bursts out. Lock all the churches? Why would that make any difference to the Spirit of God in the world? Where is the Lord and where is the church now? Perhaps now we can finally and decisively learn the lesson that the church is not a building, however splendid and however much loved. The church is you and me, and the Lord is with us, everywhere.

The 900th celebrations will be resumed in due course, and with renewed thanksgiving. And this Eastertide, we trust God and thank God for that risen life, in and around us, everywhere.

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.