

St. Brandon's 31st March 2024 Easter Day 10.15am

Unfinished!

Thank you, Alison and Linda, for reading today.

I wonder if I'm the only one who was a bit puzzled by those two Bible readings?

If like me you sometimes watch a TV drama on iplayer and click on an episode you've not yet got to- sort of skipping part of the plot, you may relate to what I felt about the first reading from Acts. Peter is speaking very confidently about Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, about all the people who saw him after he rose from the dead and it feels as if we've skipped an episode, to next week, at least!

Then Alison brought us back to today, to the very first Easter morning and those sorrowful, faithful friends of Jesus who go to the tomb to anoint his body. This was both to complete the burial ritual which had been so rushed on Friday to get him buried before the Sabbath, and to ensure his body is properly covered with spices, as was the custom.

Mary, Mary and Salome have come at the first possible moment after the sabbath, at daybreak, not knowing how they would be able to get into the tightly sealed tomb, *not knowing* if there would be a guard, *not knowing*.... And as we heard, they met a young man in white, an angel, who tells them Jesus has risen from the dead, not to be frightened and to go and tell Peter and the others that they will actually *see Jesus again*, back in Galilee.

'So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.'

Yes, that is what Alison read, and where Mark's gospel ends. We rarely read this on Easter day- Matthew, Luke and John's versions of the story are much more satisfactory, but this year we are reading through Mark – so here we are.

How do you feel about that ending?

Do shout out words...

A mistake? Unfinished? Unsatisfactory? Puzzling?

In your church Bibles you'll find two endings which were added later by other authors, neither of which really fits. Somehow, somewhere, Mark's ending has either got lost or....

So his gospel - as it has reached us- comes to a very abrupt end.

Puzzling? Unsatisfactory? Unfinished?

Let's explore this with some mystery bags...

1. Contains a crossword with one clue still to do
2. Contains a piece of knitting....
3. Contains a packet of chocolate biscuits...
4. Contains music from Schubert's 8th Symphony

1.Puzzle We have this problem in the Rectory... the crossword doer (mentioning no names) sits up late trying to answer the final clue, until he gives up and switches off the light... Strangely, the next morning it just pops into his head and there's the answer.

The greatest, most important puzzle of all is how the world and all humanity could ever be rescued from death and destruction... is there any hope for us all? **Easter** is God's answer to this puzzle and it is in that missing clue, *1. down, N*, do you know the answer to *1.down*? (RISEN) Jesus has RISEN!

Jesus, God's only son, broke the power of death for ever, and came back to life to prove that this is true.

Because of Jesus's death and resurrection there is hope and a future – but it's not the end... this Easter puzzle may be solved, but just like in the Rectory, you can be sure there will be others to follow – faith will always make us keep puzzling and wondering and asking God to help us.

2.Knitting! It's going to be a scarf with the wool and needles... all you need to complete it, though it's *unfinished*. I always knit one or two scarves (they are about my limit in knitting skill!) to put in our shoeboxes later in the year... This unfinished item is here to remind us that the work of Jesus goes on – sharing love and gifts at Christmas, or during Christian Aid week, for example – and that we are all part of this, we help each other and we work together. God will give us the skills and resources- the needles and wool if you like, to complete what he wants us to do.

3.Biscuits...

Packet open- has someone started these?

Would you like one?

Take rest to Diane who's doing coffee this morning to all share at the end...

In some ways God's love is like a never-ending packet of biscuits but Tesco's didn't have any of those!

People from the first Easter day right up till now have tasted God's love – sweeter than honey, the Bible calls it – or yummiier than chocolate biscuits – and there is more to come as we believe in Jesus and live with him. We just need to taste and see...

Maybe today you'd like to think about that as you come forward for Communion. You may not have been before, or for a long time, but today do come and receive the bread and wine which are symbols of Christ's love and for the children today there will be seasonal chocolate egg to taste. Taste and see how much God loves you.

4.Music *FX too*

Schubert's 8th Symphony was left 'unfinished' -rather like Mark's gospel, where we began...

We are all part of the Symphony of God's love. Amazingly, when Jesus came to earth, God's own son, he began this symphony and invited human beings just like us – Mary, Peter, Salome, Mark – to each play their part in sharing the good news, the gospel. And now it's up to us.

You might play a piccolo – or a double bass!

You might play a triangle- or a loud cymbal. Everyone of us plays our part in God's symphony and together we are called to play the music of God's love so that everyone can hear it...

God's symphony, like Mark's gospel is unfinished, because he wants all to continue it.

And it will have no end, because God, and God's love for us, are never-ending, eternal.

A wise Christian many centuries ago was thinking about these things, about our eternal future with God. He was called Augustine, and he wrote a wonderful prayer, which I'll say now.

Let's pray.

And all shall be Amen and Alleluia.

We shall rest and we shall see

We shall see and we shall know.

We shall know and we shall love.

We shall love and we shall praise.

Behold our end, which is no end.

Alleluia! Amen.