

Easter Sunday

- You would all know the famous saying of Benjamin Franklin delivered at the time of drawing-up the American Constitution – “..nothing in this life is certain but taxes & death”.
- But, do you really believe in life beyond this life after death - do you believe in the resurrection and eternal life?
- Maybe we don't think about it often, except when someone dear to us has died, but today we are asked to take it seriously.
- A woman I knew well several years ago was dying with terminal cancer.
- She had a terrible life & was a survivor of a life of abuse & spending time in mental institutions for considerable times in her life, yet she became an extraordinarily resilient & wise woman of deep faith in God.
- She asked me whether I believed in life after death.
- It came as a surprise, but I said, I wouldn't be doing what I did as a priest if I didn't, & then I asked her if she did.
- Her reply was profound – she said, I not only believe in life beyond this life, but I know that I will be welcomed into it by the God who has been beside me as my friend throughout my life.
- The resurrection is the foundation of Christian faith.
- If there is no resurrection of Jesus, then Christianity is just another ancient religion with its own particular form of spirituality and morality.
- All the values of Christianity hinge on the resurrection.
- Either Christ was raised from the dead by the powers of God or not.
- Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians states plainly:- *"If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain & our faith is in vain. ...If for this life only that we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... If the dead are not raised, let us eat & drink for tomorrow we die."* ...
- If the resurrection is not true, then our faith is foolish & we are to be pitied because of our self-delusions.
- The resurrection stories of Jesus, in themselves, do not convince us to believe in the resurrection of Jesus & his gift to us of everlasting life.
- If we believe, it is because of the power of the Spirit, who has already worked in our hearts & minds, has convinced us to believe.
- If we believe, then in some way we've personally experienced God's love for us.
- The evidence for eternal life rests on faith, & not on proof or verification or signs or wisdom or intellectual arguments from others.
- We can believe in the resurrection because we've somehow experienced it whenever new life has almost miraculously burst forth from what otherwise

seemed dead - in our relationships, when after love has soured or become stale & painful, shared circumstances draw you closer to one another & your love for one another has deepened; when our plans & hopes that appeared to erode change to new opportunities we never imagined possible; when all seems to have fallen apart in life & an honest reappraisal of values & priorities enables us to embark on a new life-giving direction that says to us that the past way of life needed to die.

- Jesus was the first sample of the resurrection – the model of what is available to us – if we accept it as gift.
- Deep down inside every person here today is a longing for immortality.
- Deep within every person is the desire to taste the waters of everlasting life...for that is the way God made us – in God’s own image.
- We were made for eternity; we want it, crave it, thirst for it; none of us wants to die – cease to exist, except if we desperately need to escape suffering.
- We would like to preserve life if at all possible...because deep down inside of every person is the desire for immortality.
- We want to hold onto life, because that is the way God made us.
- We are made for eternity because we are made in God’s image.
- But, a corollary is also true.
- Because God imprinted in us the drive for eternity, each person has an inner resistance to death.
- Deep down inside, we're afraid of the unknown & the possibility of nothingness.
- We are made for eternity, therefore death & everything associated with it makes us feel uneasy.
- We are afraid because we know too much and we know too little.
- We know too much about the infinite size of the universe and the smallness of the planet Earth and the smallness of measured time.
- On the other hand, we know too little.
- We know too little about God and his eternal Spirit.
- We know too little about heaven and too little about the resurrection.
- We know too little of God’s miraculous eternal love.
- Because we know too little, we can’t prove the existence of eternal life and love with God, and that frightens us, or at least makes us nervous.
- So, not really trusting in God, not really trusting that there is life after death & on the other hand, having deep drives for eternity within us, what do we human beings do?
- We try to create a sense of eternity here on earth, an illusion of eternity in our world - we create imitation fountains of youth.

- In the West we try to prolong life & make life as good & as long as humanly possible; nobody wants to get that old, wrinkled & senile, so drug companies are investing in the skills & genius of biochemists who are developing an anti-aging drug.
- So...not really trusting God's future & yet having drives for immortality within, we try to create fountains of youth here on earth.
- We use science to create illusions of immortality here on earth, but life eternal is not to be found in anything this world offers.
- And so...we are left alone, not really trusting in God and at the same time, we have longings for eternity in our hearts. This is what Easter is all about.
- Easter is God's resounding revelation that there is life after death; Easter is God convincing us that death has been destroyed, that there is life beyond the grave; Easter is God convincing us that there is no need for us to try to create eternal life here on earth.
- On that first Easter morning, the women came to the grave, thinking there was only death, & Jesus appeared to them & convinced them & the other disciples that there was life after death.
- The resurrection is meant to be for us a source & motivation for new life.
- We can begin to live eternal life now, not by grasping onto life, but by spending it for others & living out values that are life-giving, loving & eternal, & by allowing God to develop his friendship with us now.