

Better than new (John 20:1-18)

It's so easy to think of Easter Sunday as a time of joy and celebration. But the very first Easter Sunday began in sadness. In John's Gospel, we read about Mary Magdalene. Her grief drew her to the tomb where she could be as close as possible to Jesus' body. But she discovers an obviously disturbed tomb, the body missing – presumably stolen. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." (John 20:2)

You can see the pain of her double loss – the companion-ship of her beloved rabbi, Jesus, and now his body – in her weeping. Unlike Peter and the other disciple, Mary stays at the tomb. If she cannot be close to where Jesus' body is, she can at least be near to where it last was. And it is there that she experiences something she can never have imagined.

First, she sees two figures angels in white, sitting where Jesus' body had laid. They question why she is there and why she is weeping. And then turning around Mary meets a figure who asks her the same questions. It's only when this person calls her by her name, like the good shepherd calling one of their flock (John 10:14) that she realises it is Jesus.

You can imagine Mary reaching out to him –her hands and arms stretched out in love and greeting. But despite Jesus being within touching distance, he resists: "Do not hold on to me". His words suggest a new kind of relationship ...

I am always amazed which TV shows are popular. And one of last year's hits was the BBC's *The Repair Shop*. Members of the public bring their broken or faded family treasures to craftsmen and women, who then restore and repair them to their former glory. When they are reunited with the items, they talk about breathing new life into them.

I came across the Japanese art of repairing things not long ago – particularly mending pottery or china. It's called *kintsugi*. And when they stick the broken pieces together they add powdered gold with the glue. The item now becomes more beautiful than before, it's better than new.

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection, and we worship Jesus our risen Lord and Saviour. Christ has risen – not to an old life, but to a new life – better than new.

Through the cross and through his resurrection Jesus invites us to life, new life. In fact, even better than new life – eternal life. This is God's gracious and precious gift to each one of us. We have been broken by our faults and failings. But Jesus offers to restore us. Like the broken pottery, we are not only restored to wholeness, but are filled with the golden light of the love, of the forgiveness, of the grace of God by Christ's glorious resurrection. We are a new creation, treasured and precious to God.

"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

Sunday 4th April 2021

Prayer for the Week

May we step out into this new day and week,
and into the resurrection light.
Feel the joy that new life brings,
accept the peace that it offers
and share the love that it gives. Amen.
