

Easter Day - 20/4/14
Sermon preached at La Chapelle Achard
by Revd Caroline Sackley

Some of us, as children, will have made Easter gardens. I loved doing it. In later years I was allowed to help children make ones to decorate the church, what fun, what a lovely result.

Together with the season of spring and all its new growth, and the setting of the resurrection stories in a garden, its hardly surprising that making gardens, having churches full of flowers are part of our traditions of Easter.

Jesus is mistaken for a gardener, he is indeed the gardener, though not in the way Mary thought, he is the true Adam, planting again the vineyard of Israel, bringing all of God's people home from the exile of death and sewing them like seed in a world made new.

Easter is the beginning of God's new creation, new covenant, new world. With the rolling away of the stone, a great door has swung open in human history, and we are encouraged to go through, to make our own what is on the other side.

We need imagery to help show the layers of what is happening on this amazing day. To try to help us absorb all the implications. Easter happenings are very difficult for us to find language for, unsurprisingly.

The story is full of puzzles, which is understandable for something so momentous and unique. Even in ordinary life people's description of event and people vary, even more so is that to be expected with this event.

Easter invites us to recognise a new level of being. Jesus' resurrection is different to that of Lazarus who will die again. It is the beginning of the new creation which will only be complete when heaven and earth are finally married.

Part of the strange truth about Easter is about us, too. 'Your life is hidden with Christ in God.' We are already, because of Jesus, citizens of the heavenly world. Why do we still behave as though we aren't?

God's loving desire to share his life with us is implicit in everything he does, from creating us to redeeming us. By ourselves we don't have the power to see or understand all that is happening. People who knew Jesus well failed to recognise him. Jesus says Mary's name, and makes a bridge for her to see who he is, in all his extraordinary life. We have his voice, calling us by name so that, like Mary, we suddenly look up and see the Lord of life, standing beside us.

Like Mary however, we have to turn back to ordinary life, all be it a life changed forever. We are not called to cling to the presence of the risen Christ. Instead, like Mary, we are to shout out what we have seen.

We have to search for that beloved voice in unrecognised strangers, looking for evidence of him in others, helping to build bridges of love that will enable others to hear Jesus' voice and recognise the vast, free, unchanging faithful love of God. We have a new life in Christ, now we have to grow and flourish and bear fruit.

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.