

Delighting in God's grace

Notes on the Bible readings

- Matthew's narrative of the resurrection comes at a time of great turbulence for Jesus' followers. Jesus' popularity and number of followers had been growing. He was hailed as the one who would restore Israel, as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, and had entered Jerusalem in triumph; only days later to be tried and put to death on a cross. Excitement turned to grief, hope to fear and joy to disappointment.

- Matthew adds information to Mark's account, specifically the earthquake and descent of the angel who rolls back the stone; it doesn't have the ambiguity of Mark's or John's accounts.

- Mary Magdalene and her friend, also called Mary, take a significant role in the story. At a time when women did not have prominent roles in society, the angel, like Jesus, chooses unexpected people to do God's work. Their function in the story is that of witnesses, and, like the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well, they cannot keep their joy to themselves.

- The other readings for today hint at the events that Matthew writes about. Jeremiah anticipates the restoration of all Israel and picks up on the joy and worship that this will result in. Peter's outline of the Gospel message in Acts 10 links our role with that of the two Marys – we are witnesses, and we are chosen by God. Like them, we should not keep the joy of Christ rising from the dead to ourselves.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ How does this image speak of joy?
- ▶ What does the word 'joy' mean to you?
- ▶ How do you share the joy of Easter?



A prayer of adoration

*Risen Lord Jesus, we adore you and praise your name.
Today you defeated death and rose again.
You died on the cross that we might be free.
Thank you, risen Lord, that you did this for us,
so that we might enjoy the freedom of eternal life.
Risen Lord Jesus, we love you, we worship you, we adore you.
Amen.*

A prayer for others

*God of grace,
we bring before you those who have no joy and no hope,
those who see no future, no light at the end of the tunnel,
those scarred by pain and sadness, those who grieve.*

*We pray for those yet to hear your good news,
whether that is because they live in far-flung places,
or because they are closed to the message and the possibility
of 'What if?'*

*May we be Easter people, willing always to share the good news
of hope, restoration and freedom to all those we meet –
neighbours, friends and strangers alike.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Thank you, risen Jesus,
that you are my Lord and Saviour.
In you I have joy and hope, always.
Amen.*

Live your faith

Start a diary of joy this week. Remember, record and share these moments or events with others.