

Easter message from the Moderator

Easter is the heart of our faith. This is the heart of what we believe and why we believe. I suspect most of us could bear a little more hope, and laughter, and joy in our lives.

However the first emotion of Easter was fear. The guards at the tomb, put there by the authorities to prevent any grave-robbing, fainted. The women, not thinking through how they were going to get access to the tomb though some of them had the idea of anointing the dead body of Jesus with their spices, listened in fear to the news that the One they sought was no longer there.



Moderator of the Church of Scotland (2017) Rev Derek Browning of Morningside Parish Church, Edinburgh.

Fear is a tremendous motivator. Fear does terrible things to society. Fear is what creeps up on us unawares when illness strikes, or bereavement comes close, or a job falls through, or a relationship ends, or egos clash over who is to be more important and who will be side-lined.

The first emotion of the first Easter day is fear.

But fear is not the last emotion of Easter day. Through the clouds of fear an earthquake unsettled the ground and shook the city, and a messenger from God spoke. "Do not be afraid."

When Jesus tells us no longer to be afraid, He is telling us not only to get over our fear, but to get over ourselves.

The Easter story rises above the merely ethical (What am I to do?) and pushes into the threateningly theological (What is God doing?).

The Easter story isn't merely about us, or about the women, or the disciples, or the angel.

The Easter story is about God,

Who raises the dead, Who dispels fear, and Who makes a way when we thought there was no way.

Dare we go to Church on Easter day, out of the grey dawn and peer with the women in to the darkness of what we fear, only to find the tomb empty?

And on hearing the message of resurrection, we are invited to turn around and find that Jesus is standing there, waiting for us, looking at us, telling us also that we need fear no more.

"Do not be afraid." Come and see. Let the fear go. Then go, quickly, with great joy, and tell others.

Rt Rev Dr Derek Browning, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Photo Andrew O'Brien