

Sermon – *Easter Sunday: Images of New Life*

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Athelstone Uniting Church #63

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Text: Luke 24:1-32 [NIV]

Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus

Draw near..

as we lean into you..

Open our eyes to see

Open our ears to hear

your Word to us on this Easter Sunday **Amen.**



Today..

Today is a day of great joy and celebration in the Christian calendar,

because Christ is risen!

(He is risen indeed!)

Today, Easter Sunday, is the climax of Holy Week.

Over this last week, we've been on a journey with Jesus

From his triumphal entry into Jerusalem with Palms and cheers of Hosanna,

to the events of those last days that lead to his arrest and death by crucifixion on a cross.



Today we have heard Luke's telling of what happened on that first day of the week when the women arrived very early in the morning to find the stone rolled away and the empty tomb.

We heard of another appearance of angels with a message: He is not here. He has risen!

We heard how the women shared this news.

And how Peter went to see for himself – and he too found the strips of linen and the empty tomb.

Then we heard about what happened on that walk to Emmaus, when the risen Jesus joined two disciples for a chat as they walked and then later for dinner. And how Jesus took bread, gave thanks and gave it to them and how their eyes were opened and they recognised him. They remembered his words and actions that night before he was arrested when he had shared the bread and the cup with them and said: Remember me.

We heard how they wondered at how their hearts were burning within them while Jesus had talked with them and helped them understand the Bible.

This is a such special day for remembering this central story of our faith:

Christ died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Jesus's resurrection is good news for all of creation! It means a new start. New beginnings. New hope. For everyone.

So what I want to do today is to offer you a series of reflections on images of new life which I hope will be meaningful for you:

Easter eggs

Let's start with the Easter egg



Eggs represent new life: out of eggs hatch baby birds, fish, reptiles, insects, platypus and echidna.

For many centuries eggs were used as a symbol of 'fertility', 'rebirth' and 'the beginning':

in ancient pagan practices related to spring rites

in Egyptian mythology, the phoenix burns its nest to be reborn later from the egg that is left and Hindu scriptures relate that the world developed from an egg.

With the rise of Christianity in Western Europe, the church adapted many pagan customs and the egg, as a symbol of new life, came to represent the Resurrection of Christ.

The hollow egg representing the empty tomb – as we saw right back at the beginning of the service

and the egg itself - a symbol for the stone being rolled from the tomb.¹

Jesus represents new life

Did you notice that at the start of the Luke reading, he says:

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning (Luke 24:1)

He could have chosen to emphasise that this was the third day – as the prophets had foretold

Yet, he said on the first day:

For me, I hear echoes of Genesis 1:

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day. (Gen 1:3-5 NLT)

Do you remember the prologue in John?

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1-6 NLT)

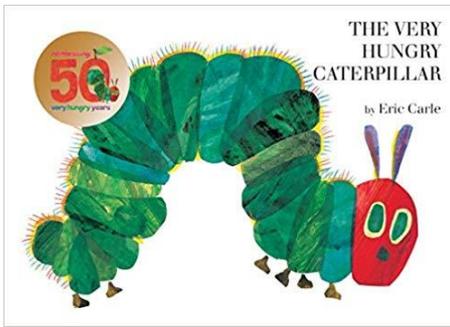
Jesus, was there, on that first day.

And here we have a new start, with Jesus rising from the dead. Another first day for all creation.

Butterfly

The next image of new life – or in this case, 'a new start' is the Butterfly

¹Adapted from: <https://www.cadbury.com.au/about-chocolate/the-story-of-easter-and-easter-eggs.aspx>



Did you know that this year is the 50th anniversary of Eric Carle's classic picture book, The Very Hungry Caterpillar?

Who remembers this story? Who has read it to their children and grandchildren?

It goes a little like this:

In the light of the moon, a little egg lay on a leaf

One Sunday morning, the warm sun came up and pop! Out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar

He started to look for some food. Each day he ate through more and more food – but he was still hungry! He ate and ate until he was a big full caterpillar!

He built a small house called a cocoon around himself and stayed inside for more than 2 weeks.

Then he nibbled a hole in the cocoon pushed his way out and



Wow! He was a beautiful butterfly!

Eric Carle was asked why he thinks his book is still so popular. He said:

"It is an affirmation to all children. It says: I too can grow up. I too can unfold my wings and fly into the world. I think it's this message of hope."²

The apostle Paul wrote to the believer in Corinth:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 cor 5:17)

And to the Romans, he said:

² <https://people.com/books/the-very-hungry-caterpillar-book-turns-50/>

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4 (NIV))

Nadia Bolz-Weber in her book called Pastrix says:

The Christian faith is really about death and resurrection. It's about how God continues to reach into the graves we dig for ourselves and pull us out, giving us new life, in ways both dramatic and small.

In Christ, we have new life.. we have hope

Water

For our next image, we have a news report thanks to Channel Nine:

<https://www.facebook.com/9NewsAdelaide/posts/2073549439615681>



Our next image is water

As you heard in the news clip
water brings:

Life to a dry desolate place
It is transformative

Where water goes, wildlife follows
There is a new sense of life and purpose
It is a miraculous situation

Is your life dry and desolate?
Do you need a new sense of life and purpose?
Then I invite you to turn to Jesus

Jesus is the living water. He said:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)

Jesus leads us to springs of living water (Rev 7:17)

and

Whoever believes in (him), as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” (John 7:38)

So, not only does the living water bless us as individuals, but it brings new life to the world through us.

Kintsugi

Eggs, butterflies, water...

The next image is a little less obvious: it is the Japanese art of kintsugi



Kintsugi means to repair with gold. This is a Japanese art form where pottery is repaired with liquid gold. The piece is even more beautiful because of its brokenness.

The imagery of kintsugi suggests that.

We are all worthy – no matter how broken we feel.

When we heal, the scars are often left behind. They are a thing of beauty. Like Jesus’ nail-scarred hands – they show what we have been through and that we have made it through

The images I chose for the creative tables today show the broken shards – broken pieces of our lives

Assembled together as a beautiful mosaic of flowers

The cross

Our final image is the cross



This powerful photo taken after the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral shows the destruction by fire, ...yet the cross shines!

Simon Hansford, Moderator of the Uniting Church in NSW and the ACT said:

“a building becomes alive, not because of stones, but through awe and worship and wonder.”³

Even though the cathedral has been badly damaged, there have been so many words of hope for it to be rebuilt and once again stand as a living monument of worship.

“Mending and healing. Restoration and return and rebuilding. That is the hope of Easter Sunday and its answer to the bleakness of Good Friday.”⁴

Quoting Brian McLaren in the book we are reading in Book Club, a generous orthodoxy:

Through Jesus’ resurrection, God has defeated death and all that comes with it:

Fear, hurry, greed, envy, injustice, materialism, despair, and selfishness. By entering life’s worst – suffering and death – and breaking through it, Jesus opens the way to heaven, to life beyond this life.⁵

That’s what the empty cross means for us!

So today, if you are feeling empty in some way, I invite you to remember the empty tomb and the empty cross..

..to remember the images of new life that I have flooded your mind with:
Eggs, butterflies, water, kintsugi and the cross

Jesus has risen. He is alive and waiting to fill your life a-new. To give you a fresh start. A beautiful life. Of joy, hope and healing.

³ This piece first appeared on Rev. Hansford's blog [Through A Stained Fence.](#)

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-19/notre-dame-cathedral-good-friday/11028396>

⁵ Brian D McLaren: a Generous Orthodoxy. P60



He doesn't promise that everything will be easy but he does promise that you won't do it alone. He will bring fresh hope. He will bring love and support in community. And a deep sense of peace and wellbeing in whatever circumstances you find yourself in.

And this message is not just for you. The good news is for all. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..

In closing let me read to you from 1 Peter from The Message:

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole. (1 Peter 1:3-9 MSG)

Alleluia Christ is risen;

(he is risen indeed.)

Amen

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it

Let's sing: Christ be our Light