

Cause for celebration

Heather Smith *reflects on* John 20:1-18

After living through the long week that leads up to the crucifixion, today we celebrate Christ's resurrection. The future looks bright and positive and we can, and should, spend some time simply rejoicing. We can affirm that life is good in the same way as when we celebrate a baptism. Although nobody expects the newly baptised to experience the rest of their lives as a fairy tale, we believe that a baptism provides a solid foundation based on spiritual birth and for that reason we want to celebrate. The resurrection is the foundation that makes all this possible. It affirms life – death cannot overcome it.

John does not say whether Peter and the other disciple rejoiced. He tells us simply that they saw that the tomb was empty and believed. Having seen it, they returned to their houses. They did not yet understand the scripture about Christ's resurrection, but they believed all the same. Not understanding what it meant, they were perhaps too bemused to think of rejoicing.

On the other hand we have the advantage of knowing how the story unfolds. Perhaps we do not yet understand what it means for us this Easter – for with God there is always the new and unexpected – but we can return home, rejoice in this affirmation of life and wait for God to reveal what comes next, just as God did for the disciples. 🍷



Life-giving God, you underpin everything that we do and everything that we are. Give us your everlasting joy today and direct our lives as we seek to live out the resurrection in all we do. Amen.

Simnel Cake

by Julian Smith

Hot cross buns are available all year round. Cream eggs usually appear after Christmas. So arguably, simnel cake can claim to be the one truly seasonal Easter food – but what's the story behind it?

It's mentioned in the Middle Ages, with suggestions that the word "simnel" refers to the fine quality of flour used to make the cake. By the seventeenth century the cake had become associated with Mothering Sunday. Not to be confused with our modern Mothers' Day, Mothering Sunday

celebrated the "Mother" church, when apprentices and domestic servants were given the day off to return to the church of their baptism to see their families. Among the gifts they took was simnel cake, especially welcome at a time of year when food was scarce. Times have changed, Mothers' Day has become more prominent and simnel cake, with its eleven marzipan balls representing the faithful disciples, has become what it is today – an Easter cake. 🍷

“For I remember it is Easter morn, and life and love and peace are all new born.”

Alice Freeman Palmer (1855-1902), American educator

Books of the Old Testament Habakkuk

by Georgina Byrne

It is Jesus' attitude to keeping laws, such as what should or should not be done on the sabbath, that lies at the heart of his differences with the Pharisees. It might also explain why Nicodemus was tentative about following him.

Although the Pharisees have often been criticised for being legalistic, there were good motives behind their dedication to the Law. The Jews had suffered greatly from conquest and oppression. In 587 BC, for

example, the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem, razed the Temple to the ground and forced many Jews to leave their homeland to live in captivity in Babylon. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel declared it to be God's punishment for disobedience (Jeremiah 11:9-13; Ezekiel 14:21-23). The Pharisees wanted to learn the lessons of the past to ensure that God would not punish them again, hence their desire to make Israel a holy nation by encouraging keeping God's laws. 🍷