

Sunday 5th April 2026; Easter Sunday. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling.

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said.”

The angel’s message to those women that first Easter is God’s message to us this day: Do not be afraid, for Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Easter means that Jesus is alive, and this means that we don’t have to be afraid anymore. Easter makes it possible for us to live our lives unafraid, not by *erasing* our fears, but by *transforming* them. The women leave the tomb with instructions from the angel, “*with fear and great joy.*”

That is what God wants for us today: a transformed fear, now filled with great joy. Not with Good Friday tears, but an Easter joy; not a crucifixion fear, but a resurrection joy, not a fear rooted in despair, but a joy rooted in faith; a joy that has transformed fear, that has passed through the very worst that life can throw at us, and so it is a joy that nothing in life can take away from us.

The resurrection of our Lord fills us with heavenly joy. That is the true gift of Easter. It makes it possible for us to live life unafraid. This Easter gift of joy rolls away the stone from whatever tomb we find ourselves in. What is your tomb today? What is it that is keeping you from living the life for which God created you, and to which God calls you? The joy of Easter can roll away that stone, and offer you a brand-new life, a life where your fears are transformed, and where your joy is made complete.

Jesus said to them, “*Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.*” Why did Jesus tell them to go there? Why not stay in Jerusalem, where they are? Why not the Upper Room, or the Temple? Why Galilee?

The answer is quite simple: Galilee is their home. Jesus is telling them to go home, back to their families; back to their jobs, back to their daily lives, and there they are promised to see their risen Lord. The joy of Easter, in other words, is not found by escaping our lives, it is found by experiencing Jesus' presence in our homes, in everything in our everyday lives. Easter means not just that Christ is risen, but that he is with us, now and always, wherever we find ourselves, our "Galilee".

Jesus is alive, and he is there, in our "Galilee," bringing new life out of death, new faith out of fear, new hope out of despair, and new light out of darkness, and because he is there, we don't have to be afraid. Our worldly fear is transformed into heavenly joy, the joy of the Risen Lord.

Today we celebrate much more than an empty tomb, even more than the resurrection of our Lord. We celebrate and give thanks for his living presence among us, and his promise to be with us always. Wherever our journey takes us, our risen Lord goes before us. Wherever our "Galilee" is, Jesus is there, just as he promised on that first Easter morning:

"Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

For Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Thanks be to God.
Amen.