

# **Sermon on Easter Day, Sunday 17 April 2022**

## **by Rev. Bill Church**

I want you to imagine that you are in Australia.

Not just so that you can nip down to the beach this afternoon with a few cold stubbies; not just to keep up with Chris and Beverley or Richard and Shirley, but to try to see Easter without the seasonal context which is so up front in our imagery – yellow and white flowers matching the liturgical colours, the primroses and daffodils that lift our spirits so much after the dull days of winter; new shoots springing from the ground and from bare branches to remind us of life that overcomes seeming death; or perhaps most extremely in Tolstoy's short novel "Resurrection" when a Russian congregation comes out of church after the early Easter liturgy to hear a grumbling sound and dull thuds like explosions – it is the winter ice on the river breaking up, the ice floes crashing together and the river starting to flow again.

The first Easter took place in the northern hemisphere and the earliest Christian writers and philosophers were all from the northern hemisphere, so it was obvious and right to deploy the sights and scenes of spring to illustrate the joy, the rebirth, the hope, the unfreezing which flows from the Resurrection.

But that all does not work for Christians celebrating Easter at the other end of the year, at the time of harvest; nor for Christians in places near the Equator where there is no perceptible spring or autumn.

They have to, and we can, look for the essential core of Easter.

Don't get me wrong, I love our setting for Easter; and the theme of spring and renewal is good teaching – it's just that it is not the only way.

Look at Saint Paul, a very urban Christian who seems to have had no interest in the natural world, and who also showed a strange lack of knowledge or interest about the details of Jesus' life.

In his letter to the Corinthians, he gives one of the earliest accounts of the resurrection, recounting just that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and was raised on the third day and then appeared to many disciples. Completely plain and unembroidered but none-the-less powerful for that.

Paul's own encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road was so powerful that it dramatically changed his life and subsequently the life of the church.

Paul never underestimated the power of the resurrection. It was God's visible vindication of Jesus as divine and as the champion of humankind against all the forces of evil.

He saw it as the total overthrow of the powers of darkness, so that Christ "led captivity captive" (Eph 4.8) or paraded them in a triumphal procession (Col 2.15).

Paul's encounter with the risen Christ was a single utterly defining event; for many others, maybe for us, it needs retelling, reliving, reimagining often, as on this joyous morning.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.