



THE ARCHBISHOP
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In today's [Yorkshire Post](#), Archbishop Stephen asks if there is a way of inhabiting life that confronts injustices and begins to make life better.

The remarkable story of Easter day begins with a visit to a grave.

Mary Magdalene gets up early to anoint the body of Jesus. She finds the tomb empty.

We too visit graveyards, leave flowers at the places where we laid our loved ones to rest, or return to places we associate with them, rekindling memories and remembering past times.

These tombs are also empty, in so far as we know that what they contain isn't the person we knew and loved, but their oh so very mortal remains.

Mary Magdalene thought it was all over, just memories remaining. So do we.

But the Easter story takes a rather surprising turn. Mary lingers outside the tomb. She is distraught and confused. Someone, it seems, has taken the body of Jesus away.

She encounters someone whom she believes to be the gardener. Perhaps he knows what has happened?

He speaks to her. He asks her who she's looking for.

Now, this is a good question,

What are we looking for?

What are we longing for?

What do we wish to find at the graveside of our loved ones?

What are we hoping for when we consider all those other constantly multiplying grave sides in the world, the people dying today in Gaza, Israel, Ukraine, Yemen, and Sudan?

Or the watery graves of those who are fleeing these places of conflict, seeking refuge in our country, and drowning in the English Channel?

Or the graveyards of hope and opportunity created by the ever-rising levels of child poverty across our region, the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) recently reporting that more than one in five people in the UK were living in poverty, that's 22% of the population and that it's even worse than this among children. We are the sixth richest economy in the world, yet 14 million of us live in poverty.

Or if this isn't enough, what about all the other horrors in the world that confound and defeat us, leaving us bereft?

How do we respond?

Is life just what we make it?

Or is there a higher order, a final justice, a reckoning that might help us make sense of life's privations and cruelty? A way of inhabiting life that confronts these injustices and begins to make things better?

And if there is, where can I find it?

In the garden on that first Easter day Mary Magdalene recognises the as yet unrecognised gardener as Jesus when he speaks her name.

She has said that she's looking for Jesus, but someone has taken his body away. But he is there before her. He is calling her name.

Many Christian people across Yorkshire will be going to church this weekend to also hear the amazing news that God knows them by name; that he reaches out to them in the places of their deepest sorrow and darkest hopelessness, and that God, who is the source of peace and justice in the world, has become, in Jesus, one who is alongside us, dwelling in our flesh and blood humanity, sharing our dying, and in so doing confronting the cruelty and injustice of the world. And risen again as a sign that in the end, love triumphs.

This doesn't take away the pain of the world. Just as the one who is risen is the one who died upon the cross, so the final hope of the final triumph of love awaits us on the other side of suffering and death. But it does mean that in the midst of this suffering, God is with us.

Of course, I know that not all people in Yorkshire believe or follow the Christian faith. Most of you won't be in church this weekend. Some follow other faiths. Some avowedly don't follow any.

Nevertheless, it is a mark of our humanity that we are all looking for something, all longing for a better world and a better life. Moreover, we are all shocked by the divisions and conflicts of the world. We all yearn for peace.

The story of Jesus, and his example of selfless and self-sacrificing love, points us all towards the heart of how this can be achieved: living for others, not ourselves; recognising our common humanity; taking the trouble to get to know our neighbour; realising that our life can make a difference and that we can use our time, energy, goodwill, passion, and resources to serve the common good.

For me, Jesus exemplifies this. He shows us what our humanity can be.

The message shouting at us from the headlines of this newspaper most days is that things need to change.



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