



THE ARCHBISHOP
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The Archbishop writes in today's Sunday Express on finding hope in the season of Easter.

I'm often asked hard questions. The most direct are usually from schoolchildren.

'What exactly do you do?'

'I'm the Vicar for the vicars. I'm a voice for the Christian faith.'

And sometimes the most painful.

'What football team do you support?'

'Spurs. I am, as the Bible says, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Though things are picking up a bit.'

But the hardest and most important are about God. How do you know God? How can I know God? How can I be close to God?

My answers vary.

I find God in the beauty of God's creation.

I find God in the beauty of worship.

I find God in the inspiring example of people lives, especially those who live lives of generosity and sacrifice.

I find God in silence.

I find God in stillness.

However, I am one of those people who don't find silence and stillness easy. I have discovered that in order for my mind and heart to be still, my body needs to be moving.

So I love to walk. I especially love to go on pilgrimage.

In a few months' time, I'm embarking on a long walk along the 62-mile St Cuthbert Way between the Scottish Borders town of Melrose to Holy Island off the coast of Northumberland.

Consequently, the time when I maybe feel closest to God each day is when I walk the dog – our new rather bouncy Cocker Spaniel, Molly. Each day begins with a walk. It is also when I find myself facing hard questions.

The story of Holy Week and Easter also generates some big questions. Most of all, what does this story of suffering and this very strange story of resurrection mean for us today?

Well, this past week, I have been leading services at York Minster standing at the foot of a huge cross.

What answers do we find there?

Well, first of all, we do see yet another horrible example of human cruelty and human suffering. We see what is worst in us and what is most painful. But at the same time, we see God. For Christians believe that Jesus is God come down to earth, God sharing our humanity. Therefore, our view of God is changed. It is God who is sharing in the sufferings of the world, bearing the brunt and feeling the bite of our cruelty and sinfulness.

What this also says to me is that the question is not so much how do I get close to God, but how does God get close to me?

In Jesus, God comes very close, sharing our humanity, showing us what it could be like, and showing us a hope that is worked out in and through the most terrible and heart breaking suffering.

None of this, therefore, makes suffering any less real. It doesn't answer the question of why such suffering happens in our world. But it does show us that God is not absent.

But the big question on many people's lips is where can we find hope for the world today?

For these are dark and difficult times. While we were wondering whether to give up chocolate or not, a war started in Ukraine. Covid has not gone away. Household bills have soared. Families have faced awful decisions about whether they dare switch on the radiator or not.

The Christian answer is that hope can be found in Jesus Christ. The same God who in the death of Jesus plumbs the depths of our suffering, in his resurrection raises us up as well, showing us that death and suffering, hatred and oppression never have the final word.

Love triumphs.

This is very good news for our world today.

Good news for the suffering people of Ukraine.

Good news for struggling families in this country.

Good news for all those who are overwhelmed by sorrows and hurt.

The cross and resurrection of Christ show us that things can change.

It's why when I walked the dog this morning, I felt able to pray for peace this Easter. To pray for an end to the pandemic. To pray for an end to war. To pray for stable government across the world. To pray for a greater sharing of the world's resources. To pray for climate justice.

Change is always hard. It requires energy, effort, love and patience. This is as true for the world as it is for us as individuals. For we, too, may be facing the challenge of change: a new job, mending a relationship, or approaching exams with an unfamiliar path beyond.

Wherever you are this Easter, and however you might be feeling about life in these hurting and confusing times, I pray that you may know God's presence, and that you may see in the cross and resurrection of Christ, God opening a door of hope in the heart of pain and difficulty, an opportunity to change, the hope of a better world.

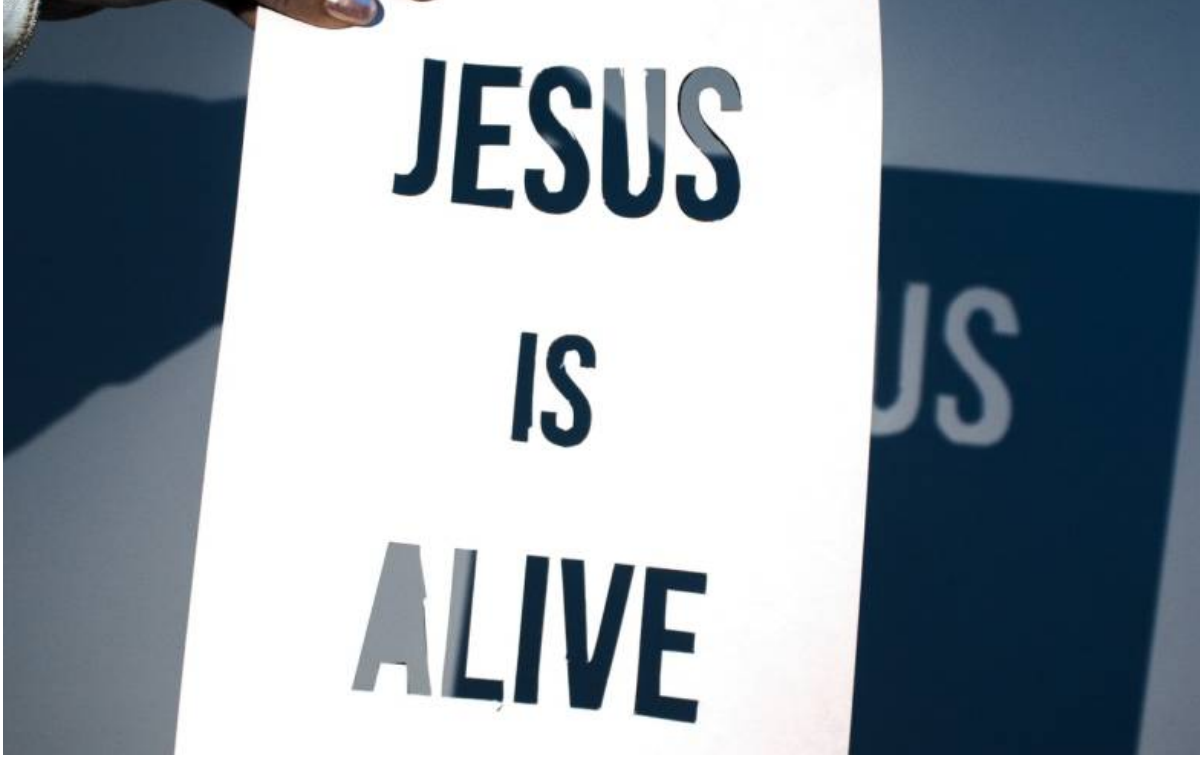
Someone once said that Jesus changed the world at 3 mph. What they meant was, he walked everywhere. And as he walked, he talked and healed and encouraged and blessed.

When we walk we inhabit the world differently. We take time to appreciate the smaller things, to be kind, to be patient and to live life simply. We see, hear and feel things differently.

So, if you can, take a walk today, think about the challenges facing your life and facing our world, and commit yourself to being part of the answer. And whether you're running, strolling or sitting still, it's my hope and prayer that you find some answers to the deeper questions through the person of Jesus Christ.

To quote a poem I wrote on a pilgrimage a few years ago: 'His work is revelation and release. His way is hope and his end is peace.'

Happy Easter!



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