**Easter Online Sermon 2022**

A few weeks ago, trudging round the garden at Bishopthorpe Palace, looking slightly dishevelled, probably unshaven, wearing the much-loved old jacket that my family thinks I should have thrown out years ago, someone comes along with an appointment to see a colleague and needing directions. I was happy to help. We chatted. ‘Oh, so you’re the Archbishop of York’, they said, in a slightly surprised tone of voice. ‘I thought you were the Gardener’.

It’s the greatest compliment I’ve received for some time. Not just because the gardens at Bishopthorpe are so lovely. It was the same case of mistaken identity that Mary Magdalene made on the first Easter day.

Coming before dawn to anoint the body of Jesus, she finds the tomb empty, the stone rolled away.

Weeping outside the tomb, she sees Jesus, but she doesn’t recognise him.

He is alive with a new, resurrected life.

It’s the same Jesus who died on the cross. But he’s not a resuscitated corpse.

His risen life is the first piece – the foundation stone – of what the Bible calls a new creation.

She thinks he’s the Gardener.

And she’s right. He is like a new Adam tending a new creation.

How should we respond to this?

Well, being mistaken for gardeners isn’t a bad place to start.

Tending to the garden of the planet and caring for its fragile, interdependent beauty must be our first priority.

Tending to the garden of the church, recognising that all ecosystems thrive because they encourage and benefit from diversity is also true for the church. We need more church, not less. We need greater variety. We need to be more diverse.

And this will require greater unity, centred in Christ, learning from him, the chief Gardner and the lover of our souls, the one who stands among us on this Easter day as he stood with Mary Magdalene, leading and guiding.

Finally, we must tend to the garden of the world where there is so much inequality, poverty, and inhumanity, not least the woeful tragedy of war in Ukraine and in many other places across our world.

Jesus, the risen Jesus, calls us: be gardeners in my world and in my church

PS Mary only recognise Jesus when he said her name.

Wherever you are and however you’re feeling about life at the moment in these hurting and confusing times, may you know the Lord’s presence, hear him call your name, and then, guided by his Spirit, pick up the trowel of truth, the spade of righteousness, the gardening gloves of peace and, planting the mustard seeds of God’s kingdom, turn this world over.