

## The energy of God

## John 20:1-10

Christians around the world have put enormous effort this last week into re-enacting the story we have been following. Donkeys and Palm Leaves last Sunday, Passover Meals and footwashing on Thursday, Crosses on Good Friday. But as far as I am aware, no-one does what seems to me to capture the events we hear in the Gospel on Easter Day. In churches solemn processions of choirs and clergy have made their stately way to their places. But if we are to be true to the story, they ought to have run in.

Everyone is running! Mary arrives and sees that the great stone which covered the tomb entrance has been moved. Panic! Off she runs to Peter and John, jabbering on about her assumptions - "they've moved him!". So off run Peter and John - but it is clear that John is fitter than Peter. They were both running, but John makes it first. He makes it a bit further than Mary, in that he looks inside the tomb, and sees the empty grave-clothes. Then Peter arrives out of breath, huffing and puffing, and actually goes inside. John's is the most energetic Gospel - but the others have people running hither and yon as well, either because they are afraid or elated. I refer to this lot as the sprinters and middle-distance runners of the Easter story.

Are you feeling energetic on Easter Day? If not, why not? Looking at the story of Easter, it seems to me that Easter is a very energetic time indeed. We've heard about those people running about on Easter morning. But there are long-distance runners as well. Later on Easter day a couple of disciples meet with a stranger on the way to Emmaus, and when he breaks bread for them in the house, they recognize him as Jesus. And they immediately hurry back the seven miles to Jerusalem to tell the others what has happened. Seven miles walking sadly, and then seven miles running excitedly. As we read about Easter, there should be a sense of breathlessness. Nobody was walking in stately procession in Jerusalem at Easter - they were on the run!

But then energy is exactly what the story of Easter is about - not the energy of Mary and Peter and John and everyone else rushing about - but the energy of God. And I mean that quite literally, because "energy" - or at least the Greek form of that word "energeia" is exactly the word Paul uses to describe what God was doing on that Easter morning. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul says "His mighty strength was seen at work when he raised Christ from the dead", and in the letter to the Colossians we read "You were raised to life with him. Through faith in the active power of God when he raised him from the dead". God's active power, his mighty strength at work - God's energy. And people have picked up on that in all sorts of ways. Lots of people this morning will sing "Christ hath burst the gates of hell". That word 'bursting' occurs in several other Easter hymns: "Had Christ that once was raised ne'er burst his three-day prison" - and 'Judah's lion burst his chains, crushing the serpents head'. We have the energy of the words of the Lord of the Dance.. This is the raw energy of God. Energy is power, Energy is life,

and in the breaking out of Jesus from death there that is all displayed for us to wonder at. I don't know what you know about the Turin shroud. I don't think my faith is going to be greatly altered by proof or otherwise that the Shroud is genuine - but one of the on-going mysteries of it is how the imprint of the face was made on the cloth. And those who want to believe its authenticity as the burial cloth of Jesus have argued that the imprint was made by the bursting out of the life that was inside it. Whatever the scientific truth, that is a powerful idea - that the energy of God's power makes its mark, as it were.

So we have the energy of those disciples on Easter Day. We have the energy of God on Easter Day. I return to what I said at the beginning – are you feeling energetic? Do you run to church, stride purposefully, or amble? Maybe you would argue that your joints don't give you much choice. But the principle is there. The disciples ran to find out what was going on. Do we come to meet with God in that sense of expectation and excitement? And, as I said before, if not, why not? Because we too are going to meet with the raw energy of God. We come to meet Jesus risen from the tomb, to receive his risen life in bread and wine. This is like that meeting the disciples had at Emmaus, if we also recognise him at the breaking of the bread. And do you recall that when they did so, they were on their way again. That also should be part of our thinking. We have good news to tell - and we should be going out with a spring in our step to do so - we will pray that we will go out to live and work in the power of the Spirit to God's praise and glory".

Being a Christian is by its nature energetic - we are filled with God's energy, Christ's risen life. There are rather a lot of sedentary Christians around - I think they have missed the point of Easter. We may not move as fast as we used to - but we can still be people who are energetic in our faith. Do you remember the words about running in the letter to the Hebrews? The writer encourages us to get rid of the things that encumber us, and run with determination the race that is before us - with our eyes fixed on Jesus like the runner keeps his eye on the finishing line. Remember he was writing to people of all ages, and in all kinds of health. He was writing to people who were persecuted, and for whom being a Christian presented many more problems than to us. But the message was - to run with determination, to be energetic. There is an Easter song for children with actions which I think sums it up. I won't ask you to sing it – but it goes

Touch your toes, jump to the ceiling, fling your arms open wide. Easter is a happy feeling, Jesus Christ is still alive.