

# Bishop Peter Easter Sunday Message

I’m delighted that this Easter I am able to bring you Easter greetings to you all and I do so in the traditional words that will be re-echoing around our churches today and will be reverberating across the world and come down to us through the centuries, the wonderful words, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia

Just recently I heard a story about a British soldier in 1944 who was serving in Normandy. And as they sense the end of the war was coming his friends asked him what he was going to do after the war, and he said I’m going to return to England and build a cathedral.

Now they must have thought he was mad because the latest cathedral that had been built was St Paul’s Cathedral some 350 years ago. The man’s name was Basil Spence and before the war he had been an architect and in 1950 he entered a competition and won the commission to build Coventry Cathedral, which was completed in 1962. And that cathedral stands as a sign and a symbol of hope, standing as it does amid the ruined medieval cathedral that was destroyed with much of the Coventry, in the bombing raids earlier in the war. A remarkable symbol of hope and of reconciliation and it stands there today. With that message of hope.

And of course, Easter is the great season of hope. I’m delighted for those who, when I was a young man brought the Gospel to me, shared their faith with me and helped me to understand what it meant to follow Jesus as my Lord and my saviour.

One of the things that I read as a young man is this booklet, the Evidence of the Resurrection which has been reprinted over and over again. It was written by Sir Norman Anderson, who was a very distinguished lawyer. When he was at Cambridge, he got a triple first in law. He went on into the army and when he came out he pursued his law career. He was knighted. He was a Queen’s Council, and he ended his role as the Director of Advanced Legal Studies at London University. He wrote this book, the evidence of the Resurrection, setting out reasons in scripture why the resurrection is true. Why it is such an important and transforming message for all the world today.

He had a son called Hugh; he was following in his father’s footsteps. He too went to Cambridge to read law. And he was a brilliant debater and was president of the Cambridge Union, but very sadly he had cancer and he died when he was 21. Five days later, Sir Norman Anderson was doing the Thought for the Day on BBC Radio. He chose to speak about the resurrection, and he said: “I will stake my life on the resurrection and so too did my son. He knew he had cancer and he knew he was dying, and his last words were, ‘I am going to be with the Lord.’ On radio Sir Norman Anderson said, “I know that he was not mistaken.”

Because Easter is a season of hope and it shares with us, that great message of Christ, who has died and he rose again from the dead to bring us life everlasting. There are a number of themes that we could think about as we come to Easter. Let me just choose three words for us to thing about: joy and peace, and purpose. Many of you may well have travelled in other countries around the world, and perhaps some of you have been fortunate enough to go to Zambia and to experience the joyful life and joyful witness and joyful worship of our brothers and sisters there. And right across the world there was a great sense of joy in the resurrection. Many people around the world today will be celebrating joyfully and wonderfully, as they remember that Christ is risen from the dead.

As we think about the joy that reverberates around the world today. We’re also aware that we as Christians as followers of Christ, need to be joyful, need to be grateful, need to be thankful and we need to celebrate the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Joy and peace.

I think this Easter we are aware, perhaps more than any other year, of all the challenges that we faced in this past year, and the challenges that come to us and everyone in the world in different ways, through the Coronavirus. We know sadly and tragically many have had the virus, many have been in hospital, and we’ve been shocked by the number of people who have died and those who mourn. Many others worried about their jobs, becoming unemployed. They worry about how they can feed their families, or they’re worried about family they’ve not been able to see for such a long time. Or they themselves feel lonely and isolated.

But even in the midst of all the challenges that we have faced there are some wonderful signs of hope. Communities have come together to help and support each other to visit those who are isolated, to serve foodbanks, and to serve in many different ways. There’s been a new spirit of people coming together and working together. There has been the wonderful work of volunteers, collecting medicine, vising people, caring for people who are lonely and isolated. Only this morning I had my first Covid jab and there were volunteers in a cold and windy carpark, full of joy and delighted to serve other people. Then there’s been the selfless service of our NHS and key workers. Those National Health and care workers, the key workers in our schools, the list goes on of people who have given of themselves selflessly to serve others and serve our communities. There is much that we give thanks for even in the midst of the challenges of COVID, much to give us hope and purpose.

The resurrection gives us a purpose, as we understand that Jesus Christ has risen for us and that new life is possible, that we can be transformed by his love, and by His Holy Spirit. On that first Easter day the women who went to the tomb were fearful, they were sad, they felt isolated. They were vulnerable and yet when they met Jesus their lives were changed and transformed. And Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “Now go and tell my disciples that I am risen from the dead.” That message of going comes to us today, it comes down the centuries and our diocesan Mission Statement, reminds us that our calling is by the grace of God and with the grace of God to be those who seek to live and tell the story of Jesus and to share with others the good news that Christ has risen from the dead.

The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed. Hallelujah. May God bless you, this Easter and always. Amen