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Lent seems to have lasted a long time this year. Moreover, the world feels more fragile, more dangerous and less hopeful. While we were wondering whether to give up chocolate or not, a war started in Ukraine. Covid has not gone away. Household bills soar. Families face ghastly decisions about whether they dare switch on the radiator or not. This is an unsettling and a frightening time. We are all longing for better news. As spring takes a firm hold, and the beautiful banks of the city walls turn yellow with the daffodils in bloom, where can we find hope for the world?

This past week, I have been leading services at York Minster standing at the foot of the huge Lent cross. What do we see there? Well, first of all, we 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. And our view of God is changed. For Christians believe that Jesus is God come down to earth, God sharing our humanity. Therefore, it is God who is sharing in the sufferings of the world, bearing the brunt and feeling the bite of our cruelty and sinfulness.

It doesn't make the 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 or distant from the sufferings of the world. Moreover, because at the heart of the Christian faith is not just the cross of Christ but his resurrection, then Christians believe that 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 never have the final word. Love triumphs.

The cross and resurrection of Christ give us hope and show us that things can change. This is the good news we celebrate this weekend. So we pray for peace this Easter. We pray for an end to the pandemic. We pray for stable government across the world. We pray for a greater sharing of the world's resources. We pray for climate justice.

Change is always hard work. It takes a lot of energy, effort, love and patience. This is as true for the world as it is for us as individuals. We, too, may be facing the challenge of change: a new job, mending a relationship, starting a new exercise or health routine, 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.

Hannv Easter!



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