



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

April 12, 2009

Easter Sunday

When I was a child my family did not go to church. I grew up on a government housing estate of about 25,000 people. It was called Park End. In England a parish church serves a defined geographical area and in the geography of the church parish boundaries park end was in a kind of no mans land. One mile south of us was the parish church of the ascension Berwick hills. One and a half miles north of us was the parish church of St Cuthbert's Ormesby. We would get a letter every so often saying our parish church had changed to one or the other. While I was growing up we were part of St. Cuthbert's Ormesby. My 2 sisters and a few of the kids on our street would walk to the parish hall of St. Cuthbert's, for Sunday school. The parish hall was about 1/mile from the church Our mom gave us 2 pennies for the offertory. We would always put 1 penny in the offertory and on the way home stop at the candy store and buy a Popsicle that just happened to cost 1 penny. We would eat the Popsicle and then stop at a stream that was not far from our street have Popsicle stick races under the bridge. But my family or friends families never went to church. Even at Easter.

Yet I remember at Easter my sisters and I always got new clothes. Looking back I know my mom and dad sacrificed for this but a few weeks before Easter we would be taken shopping and our new clothes and a new pair of shoes would be bought. We never went to church at Easter but we went to our grandparent's house with all our cousins, aunts and uncles and always some people who we did not know but had been invited anyway. And we were dressed to the hilt. We wore our new clothes with pride, and after Easter we got to wear them. And often.

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Our new clothes were a big deal. We looked different and you know we acted different. At our nana and granddads house we did not play stuff that would have a remote possibility of scuffing our new shoes or putting a hole in the knees of my new pants.

When Mary went to the garden she did not recognize Jesus. Jesus looked different and must have acted different because it was only when he spoke did she recognize him.

Resurrection changed Jesus. And the change in Jesus was so incredibly important because it is in the resurrection of Jesus that god wants to change us. He has given us some new clothes and has asked us to look different and act differently.

The clothes he has given us are the garments of the heart that if worn will be reflected in the way we live our lives.

One of the garments is forgiveness. Through the death of Jesus of Nazareth god has assured us of the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness. Absolutely, unconditionally, without question –forgiveness.

God forgives his children their sins. And god asks his children to do the same to one another. That is life changing. To wear the garment of forgiveness. To live a forgiving life. Yes we will act differently.

Then there is the garment of equality. Resurrection broke all human boundaries and any human notion that god had just chosen a few people to love. Jesus died to draw the whole world to himself.

The new garment of the heart is to see through the outside of a person and see them as a child of god-loved just as much as we are by god. We see through the color of their skin. We see through the

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physical or mental disability. We see through the happiness creases that age brings. We see through the male or the female. We see through the outside to gaze on the child of god. Yes we will act differently.

We are also given the garment of the courage to speak. The disciples were locked away in fear because of what happened to Jesus. His resurrection appearances to them in the beginning were behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Resurrection gives the garment of courage to speak. I am not saying we have to talk incessantly about god Jesus and the Holy Spirit but what I am saying is we have been clothed with a garment that fashions and molds our thinking into an attitude that produces words that can be kind. They can be words of compassion. They can be words of encouragement. They can be words that are loving. This was so important to god that at Pentecost he gave the gift of languages to the disciples so that they could tell the gospel in a language that the people understood. Our words are important and should be clothed with love.

Because love should be the closet that we take all our clothes from.

The death of Jesus on the cross was the ultimate price that god paid to tell his children how much he really loves us. The resurrection was simply proof of that love. If we do not understand Good Friday we will never understand Easter Sunday.

Jesus was stripped naked to be crucified. We have to be stripped of our old ways of unkindness, intolerance, judgment and even hate to be clothed with the new garments of resurrection. We as followers of the way of Jesus of Nazareth must be wearing clothes that make us look different and

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act different.

There is the wonderful story about the emperor who was fooled into believing he was wearing a new garment made of invisible cloth. All the people were led to believe that he was wearing the new clothes except one little boy who said 'but he has nothing on'.

Resurrection is about getting the new clothes that god is offering to his children. He asks us to wear them because we are asked by god to look different and act different. It should be no surprise to those who we live and work with that we are wearing the garments of resurrection. Because if we have to tell them we are Christians and they have no idea just listening to our words or seeing our actions, then we are simply emperors who think we have new clothes.

Resurrection of Jesus changed people's lives so much that it changed the world. Resurrection power is still life changing and we are the ones who are being asked to take a look at our wardrobe, because Easter is still, for all of us, about the new clothes

Amen.

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