**Address for 17th May 2020 The Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**St John 15 v 9 “Because I live you too will live”**

Having been brought up in a Vicarage death and funerals were never a problem. They were simply a part of life. So it was from a very early age we knew the hymns that my father wanted when the time came for his own funeral. The first of these was that lovely hymn that Eric Thompson chose a fortnight ago for this service. It was the hymn for St. Andrew’s day written by Mrs Alexander, “Jesus calls us o’er the tumult.”

Jesus calls us o’er the tumult

Of the vain world’s golden store

From each idol that would keep us

Saying “Christian, love me more.”

This is the persistent call of God that happens again and again throughout our lives.

He calls us to be better than we are, calls us to that life that is beyond a life that is with Him for ever.

The other hymn that my father wanted was that magnificent Easter hymn

Jesus lives! no longer now

Can thy terrors death appal us.

Jesus lives! by this we know

Thou O grave, can’st not enthral us.

When I grew up, as a small boy we were in the middle of the second world war. Last week we remembered 75 years since Victory in Europe. It was a time when many young men from the town where we lived were killed. Whenever the news came through of another death the Church bell would be tolled telling the town that another person had given their life for our freedom. This did not finish on May 8th for the war continued in the Far East where our local regiment “The Cambridgeshires” were fighting. The celebrations were far greater after that war finished in August. It was during the service of thanksgiving that marked that occasion with a packed Church that I became a member of the Church Choir for the first time.

Today we live in a strange world. It is a world where the unseen enemy is the mysterious virus. For the last few weeks we have had daily reports of how many people have died as a result – a number that continues to grow each day. It is disturbing time – a worrying time.

The Christian message is still the same. God is in control. It is Him that we trust. He knows our fears and has promised that “because He lives, we too will live.”

So how appropriate were the readings set for today, still in the season of Easter.

The Old Testament (the word Testament means God’s Covenant – His promise to His people) was about the end of the flood in Genesis. It was God’s promise that He would not destroy all creation. To underline that we have the Rainbow. It is immortalised in William Wordsworth’s poem “My heart leaps up when I behold the Rainbow in the sky.” Did those who used the present symbol of the Rainbow know where it comes from?

The Gospel for today is Jesus’ promise (the New Testament or Covenant) made by God with us, His people “Because I live, you too will live.”

We are now at the end of another Christian Aid week. We are conscious once more of the desperate need for help that exists in many parts of the world. There are the many huge refugee camps where there is no possibility of space between people and there are many parts of Africa where the pandemic has yet to reach. They have no ventilators let alone protective clothing. These people, like us are also God’s Children. For them, as for us real life is in store.

God’s Promises will never fail.

Jesus lives! Our hearts know well

Naught from us his love will sever

Life not death, nor powers of hell

Tear us from his keeping ever. The Ven Chris Hawthorn