

Sermons at the All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Alison Heal on Easter Sunday 20th April 2025

Bible passage: Acts 10: 34-43 and Jonh 20: 1-18

Last Sunday I asked you all for words to describe Jesus. We gathered together a great range of words, from children and adults, and a few of them really stood out. I think it was Simon who said 'revolutionary', and from the choir Ben threw in the Christmas carol lyrics: 'King and God and Sacrifice'. There was a great discussion over there about Jesus as 'teacher', and from the area around the Pray and Play space we heard important words like 'friend' and 'special'.

Today, Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of our revolutionary, special King, God, friend, teacher and sacrifice. If you have our reading from Acts open now (p126 NT) you'll see we did a pretty good job of describing our Lord Jesus, because Peter used most of the same ideas when he shared the Good News about Jesus to a Roman household. Peter says a few things about God: he is impartial and accepts all who come to him, he was with Jesus throughout his life, he raised Jesus to life after his crucifixion.

Then Peter says *a lot* about Jesus: Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power, Jesus preached peace, Jesus went about doing good and healing those oppressed by the devil, Jesus was put to death on a tree (that's an OT way of understanding the cross), Jesus was raised to life and appeared to his followers, Jesus is Lord of all, Jesus commanded his followers to preach about him, Jesus is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead, Jesus is the one the prophets spoke about, the one who gives forgiveness of sins to all who believe in his name.

That's quite a list, and quite a sermon from Jesus' impetuous friend Peter.

PAUSE

I'm going to take a moment to break Peter's list down into two sections – listen and see which one you identify with most, which list is most like the way you'd describe Jesus, if we started that Time to Talk again.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus is Lord of all• Jesus is the one the prophets spoke about• Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power• Jesus liberated those oppressed by the devil• Jesus was raised to life• Jesus is the one who gives forgiveness of sins to all who believe in his name• Jesus is ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus preached peace,• Jesus went about doing good and healing• Jesus was put to death on a cross• Jesus commanded his followers to preach about him
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Those are my two lists. You may well find your descriptions of Jesus cross over and fit into both lists, or you might find you land more on List 1 or List 2.

Why I am asking you to think about Jesus this way? Or more accurately, why am I asking you to think about what you think about Jesus?

Because, as we found when we were doing our Lent Course on the Nicæan Creed recently, the more we think about how we understand Jesus, the more we discover where the gaps are in our relationship with him.

When I'm more in a List 1 mood, I may have a very spiritual understanding of Jesus: I recognise him as my Lord and Saviour, I place a lot of importance on my faith in him, and my salvation in him. And those are good things.

When I'm more in a List 2 mood, I may be more ready to see the injustices of the world, and act on them, in Jesus' name. And that is certainly a good thing.

But when I'm working from a List 1 mentality, I don't quite see how Jesus impacts my daily life – the kind of thing we talk about when we do our This Time Tomorrow interviews on a First Sunday. List 1 all seems very church-based and not much to do with life at home, school or work.

And when I'm working from a List 2 mentality, my daily life, or at least the actions in it, are all that counts, and I don't get the sustenance I need from God, to avoid a life of anxious and unfulfilled action.

What I need is the integration of those two lists. Peter didn't separate them. It's modern western life and thinking which pushes us into separating them, expecting us to see faith as private and actions as divorced from that private life.

PAUSE

Mary Magdalene, from our Gospel reading, may be the model for us to integrate these lists. She's a woman of action, coming to the tomb, running back to the disciples, finally announcing the good news to them. She's a woman of devotion, wanting to be with her Lord even in his death, weeping outside the tomb when she's confused, holding onto him when she finds him, unbelievably, miraculously, returned to life. And she's a woman of obedience, following Jesus' culturally bizarre instructions to 'go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'.

Mary Magdalen, a woman of action, devotion and obedience.

Our Lord Jesus, a teacher of peace, healing and justice. Our Lord Jesus, the resurrected Lord of Life who forgives, and judges, and saves.

Where my life is one of action, let me turn to our *Lord* Jesus, in prayerful devotion and obedience, so that the fractured parts of my life can be made whole in Him.

Where my life is one of devotion, let me turn to our *Teacher* Jesus, in obedience, to learn what actions he has for me to take on, for the environment and his suffering creation, for oppressed people in Palestine, in Ukraine, in Sudan....

Let's bow our heads and pray:

Lord, our human nature and our cultural expectations can create false separations in our lives. We bring to you now, our beliefs, our values, our faith, our actions, our daily lives. In the power of your Holy Spirit, begin to weave together the different strands of our lives, so that our *whole* lives are a testimony to your resurrection, your peace, your justice, your life for the world, in all its fullness.

Amen