

1 COR 15.3-5, 12-20: WE ARE NO LONGER HELPLESS!

Elisabeth Kubler Ross, a world-renowned thanatologist, tells of an eight-year-old boy who was dying from an inoperable brain tumour. The child expressed his feelings about dying in the pictures he drew. One picture in particular showed his feeling of helplessness. In the background of his picture were a house, sunshine, trees and grass. In the foreground he drew an army tank. In the front of the barrel of the tank was a tiny figure with a stop sign in his hand.

Just as the tiny figure had no hope of stopping the tank, so the boy knew that he had no hope in stopping death. True sometimes through pills & potions, through chemotherapy and radiotherapy, and all kinds of other therapies, we can delay the onset of death. But ultimately we are helpless – death must have its way.

But the good news of Easter Day is that there is one who has come to our rescue. In the words of the earliest creed of the church which Paul quotes here in 1 Cor 15:

“Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures, and was buried; He was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures, and he appeared to Peter and then to all the twelve” (1 Cor 15.3-5)

Yes, like all others before him Christ died – but unlike all others he did not die because of his sin, but rather for our sins – there on the Cross took upon himself your sin and mine, and in doing so Jesus dealt with sin’s power. **“Death gets its power from sin”** (1 Cor 15.56), wrote Paul – but if sin has been robbed of its power, so too has death.

Hence, declares the creed, **“he was raised to life”**. Death could no longer hold him. Indeed, what is true then, remains true today: because the Jesus who was raised to life, is alive for evermore.

“He was raised to life” – the particular Greek tense employed here signifies not just an event in the past, but an event that spills over to the present.

Christ was raised to life – and remains the risen Saviour.

And as a result he is able to offer life and immortality to us all: **“The truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised”** (1 Cor 15.22). We are no longer helpless.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus death has lost its power to hurt.

“Where, Death, is your victory? Where, Death, is your power to hurt? Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin gets its power from the Law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Cor 15.55-57)