



*St Luke's in the City*

150 years - 2009

## **Celebrating at the EASTER Crossroads**

12 April 2009

Dear Friends,

Blessed Easter to you and to those you love!

I have long wrestled with what it means to say 'Christ died for us,' and there is clearly no time like Easter to so focus attention on this Christian proclamation. On this day we have gathered in darkness, before first light, tentatively following the Paschal Light, listening for the promise of salvation woven throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, lifting our hearts and voices in jubilant 'Alleluias!', reaffirming our baptismal faith at the waters of the newly-blessed Font - our faith that in Jesus of Nazareth we have seen and felt the presence of the One long-awaited to redeem God's people. In confidence and hope we declare that the exalted Lord of all, baptising with Spirit and fire, died to set us free. But I have long struggled with what that really means. I know his dying and rising is essential to Christian faith, and that, as St Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead then our faith has been in vain. But what does it mean to say that Jesus died for us?

I find myself struggling with two opposing thoughts: Jesus has done everything that is necessary, for all time and all people, requiring nothing of me other than to say I believe in him; or, Jesus started something, but I must myself undergo this same work. These two statements present us with an insoluble paradox. The result of the first statement is that there is nothing I can do, nothing I can contribute to the work of salvation, because of the One who on Good Friday's cross declared: "It is accomplished!" The result of the second statement is that I also must take up my cross and lay down my life, and indeed, as St John's Jesus tells disciples, "You will do greater works than these," or as St Paul declares, we must complete the sufferings of Christ in our own bodies. Salvation requires me. See, there's the problem - the Biblical tradition itself contains both statements! So which is true?

Both are true! That is that nature of paradox. The real enemy of faith is the attempt to resolve the tension, either one way or the other. To do so is to become defensive - a fear-filled and anxious stance out of which I imagine it is necessary to defend either God's sovereignty, or human responsibility. But whereas premature and 'easy' resolution one way or the other narrows down and confines truth, paradox enlarges, makes space for more truth. Jesus is fully Divine, and fully human. You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. You will do greater works than these. This is the 'Paschal Mystery'. Thanks be to God. Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia! May the Paschal Mystery enlarge our minds and hearts, and deepen our love.

With my love,  
David