

HYMNS:. 412 *'The strife is o'er, the battle done'*; 408 *'At dawn the women made their way'*; 416 *'Christ is Alive let Christians sing'*; 419 *'Thine be the Glory'*

Reading: Luke 24; 1 – 11

Jonathan Creek, Morse, Hercule Poirot, Frost, Miss Marple, I do love watching the sleuths on TV. I enjoy reading the exploits of Tempe Brennan, Adam Dalgleish and of course Edinburgh's own – Rebus. Millions of people enjoy 'whodunnits' But would we enjoy detective programmes so much if the crime was never resolved or the secret never revealed? How do you feel when you don't know the answer to something? It can be very difficult to live with questions and uncertainties, but it is part of life that we all face. For many of our questions, there are no easy answers. Perhaps that is part of the appeal of crime drama is that the mysteries are generally solved and justice brought about, when in real life that's not always the case.

In a famous American Church one Sunday, the Gospel lesson had been read and the minister was about to begin the sermon. Suddenly a stranger seated in the balcony stood up and interrupted the service. "I have a word from the Lord!" he shouted. Heads whipped around, and elders bounded up the balcony stairs like gazelles. They managed to escort the man into the street before he could elaborate further on just what "word" he had been given. The minister of the Church then wondered why it is, that each week when he, like countless preachers in countless pulpits, stands up, and in effect, says the same thing as the man in the balcony: "I have a word from the Lord!" No alarms sound, no one is astonished and no apprehensive elders race forward to muscle the minister into the street, instead, everyone gets comfortable and settles down and switches off!!

It is reassuring for those of us who preach to realise that the very first sermon didn't make much immediate impact either. When the women came back

from the tomb with the astounding news that it was empty and Jesus had risen – the response was underwhelming. The response? - The translations differ; you can take your pick. The words seemed to them like "an idle tale," "a silly story," "utter nonsense," "sheer humbug."

Why? Who knows – perhaps because it was women who told the tale – perhaps because it just seemed too good to be true.

Whilst there is evidence for the Resurrection –there is not compelling evidence of the type that would make the scientists happy - the TV super sleuths couldn't make a case with it. There is not the kind of evidence which would convince a hardened sceptic – and its all too easy to get caught up in trying. It's so easy to focus so much on the empty tomb, that you forget to speak to the gardener or to the stranger who meets you on the road.

There is a mystery about Easter, a great and wonderful mystery. There is a truth that lies beyond all our questions, our doubts, our fears, our concerns – a truth that lies beyond all the evidence. Whatever the details of what did or did not happen that Easter morning, a small group of people discovered that their lives were transformed, they discovered a new way of living and loving, a new way of perceiving Jesus, a new way of relating to him. From that time forward, this small group of people realised that their lives were defined – not by death, but by love, God's love shown in Jesus.

We live in a world which today is defined by disease and death. People are anxious and worried because it feels as though death is just around the corner. Life has become defined by curves on graphs – flattening or otherwise.

Today we celebrate Easter. And we confess Easter is a mystery! In the end the only evidence we have to offer those who ask us how we can possibly believe is - because we live, that is why. Because we have found, to our surprise, that we are not alone. Because **we** have discovered that it is not death that defines life, but love and hope and joy. We have the hope that life

is longer than our years and that love is stronger than death. Because we never know where our Risen Lord will turn up next.

That unexpected Lord, who shows himself as a gardener, as a neighbour, as an AIDS orphan in Malawi, as a teenage refugee in the Syrian camps; that Easter Lord, invites us to be part of his mystery, to be about new life in a weary, frightened world. Let us share the Good News!