

I was going to begin this morning in serious mode- after all you can't expect mildly amusing sarcasm from me every time can you? So I was going to start this morning in serious mode- laying aside for one year all the Easter jokes about Margaret Thatcher because I might make all Vwei's nightmares come true and swear in the pulpit if I don't. So I was going to start all serious with the weight phrase "All things come to an end." But that's not terribly 'Happy Easter' is it and if you think about events of the last couple of years you'll quickly realise it's not entirely true either. 'All things come to an end'. Yes. Apart from, it appears, Brexit. and Theresa May's premiership. 'Almost' all things come to an end' hasn't quite got the same snappy ring about it so 'All things come to an end' it is. Even us. We all know this, but there's no point dwelling on it. Nobody could enjoy what the summer offers if they were always conscious that at some point they've got to climb aboard the Easy Jet and leave Benidorm behind for the dull cold climes of England. Nobody could enjoy the bank holiday weekend if they knew they'd soon have to step on the bus and leave Margate. Or was it nobody could enjoy the bank holiday unless they knew they'd soon be on the bus back from Margate. Take your pick. Anyhow, I concluded that with the possible exception of any time spent in a Kent seaside town 'All things come to an end' would be a bit too morose for this happiest of days, so instead I thought we could be all forward looking and imagine today what the world will be like in fifty years time. What do you reckon?

Will we be living in a world of technological marvels: driverless cars, drones delivering our Amazon shopping down the delivery chute to our robot housekeepers, while we're busy filling our endless leisure time in virtual realities still hoping the neighbours don't see?

Or will the future be a Mad Max dystopia of fractious factions ruled over by a malfunctioning Maybot, the whole country split into warring tribes fighting over access to abandoned landfill sites in the hope that we might dig up an unopened tin of baked beans and finally get to have a meal that wasn't until recently part of somebody else? No hold, on, we're talking 50 years not the month after Brexit.

Half a century hence, will ecological disaster have swept the globe, global warming leading to flooding, desertification and mass extinction, cockroaches the only creatures left scratching survival from the unyielding earth, and Theresa May still PM?

Will it be the case that fifty years ago Jeremy Corbyn became PM and the people of 2069 are living the bliss of a socialist utopia, all equal, all happy and all spontaneously

bursting into song because the tractor factory has exceeded its production target only twenty-four months into the five year plan?

Perhaps when I asked you to imagine the world in fifty years time, you thought who cares? I won't be here. That's not what you'd admit to if asked out loud obviously- because no, no, no you want to bequeath a world worth leaving to your children and grandchildren even if you don't have any- but 'who care's is the way most of us behave. Nevermind. Humour me this once. It's Easter. Back to our possible potential futures.

However we imagine the future- techno, dystopia, disaster, back to basics- what we usually imagine is something like now, but exaggerated. A typical Tuesday morning but in technological drag, our humdrum lives now but with jet packs, a lunch box full of protein pills and clothes made out of baking foil. We never imagine anything completely different- partly because it's extremely difficult to imagine something that doesn't exist and we know nothing about- and most importantly, because it's almost impossible for us to let go. We treat the future like the clothes in the wardrobe that we're keeping in the hope that we'll lose enough weight one day to fit in them and they'll come back in to fashion, even though you know you'll never be that thin again and yes, sometimes what goes around comes around, but only the good stuff and none of that is in your wardrobe. The future... will be like now, but I'll be thinner and back in fashion. To be honest, I think the jet packs are more likely.

So back to the beginning of this sermon: it is all connected I promise you. All things come to an end.

In order for things to change- and the one thing you can be certain about is that they will- other things must come to an end. For there to be a future, the present must become the past. And in order for you to see that change when it's happened, you have to let go. Letting go is hard, but unless we let go we cannot move forward, unless we let go we will be forever stuck in the past while the world moves on around us, increasingly out of touch, deluded in our memories, fixed in our ways, stymied in our rose-tinted blinkers and stuck in the mud. But still, it's so hard to let go.

This is what we see in our Gospel this morning. Meet Mary Magdalene as she realises that the gardener is not the gardener after all: it's Jesus. She won't let go. Mary thought Jesus was dead. And now he isn't. It's instinctive that she's going to

want to leap up and grab hold of him to make sure he's real; it's only natural she's going to want to express her joy that it's not a dream by holding him close. But Jesus is having none of it. 'No! don't hold on to me' he says.

Scant weeks ago listening to a sermon for children I heard the preacher declare 'at Easter, Jesus came back to life'. Close, but no chocolate egg. Jesus has not come back to life, he has risen from the dead. He has not so much returned as moved on to a new reality. At Easter Jesus rose from the dead to new life, the resurrection life. That new life is seeded in the old but it's not like an extension to Article 50: same for a bit longer: it is no longer the old life, it has been transformed into something completely new.

That's why Jesus says 'don't hold on to me' to Mary Magdalene. He's not worrying about getting his brilliant white clothes dirty. He's not feeling still rather sensitive after all the horror of Good Friday. He won't let Mary cling to him because wants Mary to understand, and she won't if she's holding on to the past. Right now, she's thinking 'He's come back to life! He wasn't dead after all!' But she's wrong, she's keeping hold of the old: Jesus was dead, well and truly, and now his is a *new* life. And here is the bit that is so hard to comprehend. No longer do all things come to and end, the resurrection life will never cease. Resurrection really is life for keeps. That's what eternal life means.

Sometimes changes happen slowly and gradually: the gentle near-imperceptible round of the seasons; growing up and growing older; the evolutionary processes take eons to take us that micro leap from bickering bone-wielding apes to Twitter users. Some things change achingly slowly- the Anglican attitude to women or LGBT people for example- I'm hoping to still be alive when they finally move into the 1970s. But sometimes change is quick and dramatic. Sometimes change is so fast you really, really struggle to take it in. That is the change that greeted Mary Magdalene that very first Easter morning. The only way she was going to understand it, the only way she was going to get a handle on the truly revolutionary thing that has happened, the only way she was going to comprehend the evidence before her eyes, the only way she was going to get it was by letting go, by not holding on, by releasing from her grasp everything she thought she understood about the world, life, the universe and everything: only then would she be able to start to glimpse the new reality.

We've all been there. You've all been there. Me too. And this morning our baptism candidate is going there. Whatever is going on in our heads- or not- at the moment of our baptism, *that* is the moment when the realisation finally starts to dawn, that is the moment that we begin to understand, however imperfectly, however slowly, what happened that first Easter, that is the moment we stop holding on and let go. It will take a long time- a lifetime indeed- before we understand that change that has happened, to understand that where we are now. Because the astonishing thing is it's not that by letting go we will understand what has happened: by letting go we will *become* what has happened. Baptised into the risen Christ, we will enter the new life; where Jesus is, we will be too.

The old life will come to an end. It *has* come to an end. Welcome to the resurrection.