

## **EASTER MESSAGE**

### **FROM THE BISHOP OF BLACKBURN, RT REV. JULIAN HENDERSON**

*The video version of this message [is available here](#) on the Diocesan YouTube channel.*

*Bishop Julian filmed his message in the Easter Garden of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School in the centre of Preston.*

One of the things that the pandemic and lockdown has made very clear is that having something to hope for is so important if we are to keep going and stay positive, when everything around is tough, demanding, painful, sad and unwelcome.

This last year has been a real challenge, but have we noticed how often the hope of something better has been mentioned?

When ill, there is the hope of recovery, the end of the pandemic and the hope of a vaccine. When people have been separated, the long-anticipated hope of meeting again. When having to distance, the hope of a hug.

When without work, the hope of an interview. When staying at home, the hope of a holiday away. And so, the list goes on. When such hopes fade or even disappear, it's hard to go on and sadly we know some have found they can't.

Having the hope of something different and better; the hope of something we enjoy, to look forward to, makes all the difference in the present. I look forward to holding for the first time a grandson born four months ago. It will be different things for all of us.

It certainly was true for Jesus all those years ago, when He was here on earth, as He faced the opposition and hostility of the religious leaders of His day and knew that betrayal, arrest, trial, torture and execution was the path He was called to walk.

Saying to His Father, not my will, but Yours be done, surely it was the hope of resurrection, hope of reunion with His Father and appearing to His disciples again; hope of the increase in the number of those disciples; hope of the building His church; hope of growing His Kingdom of justice and mercy and the hope of the final victory over all forms of evil that gave Him strength and resolve to see through the costly and sacrificial plan for the salvation of the world.

Hope is key. And the follower of Jesus has it in abundance. It is different from wishful thinking; just hoping perhaps that things might get better tomorrow.

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Yes, it is good to have things to look forward to, but if all our hopes are focused on this life, we shall be disappointed again and again.

The Christian hope is for all those human things, yes, but all in the context of a hope for beyond this life, beyond death; a hope of being with Jesus in His Kingdom in that new creation, the hope of eternal life.

And the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on that first Easter Day, His triumph and then his subsequent appearances, are a guarantee of the certainty of that hope for those who believe. That is not wishful thinking.

That is why Christians are able to affirm in one of the statements of faith, the creeds, their hope and anticipation of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. It's a main and central Christian belief.

Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, though they die, yet shall they live. The One who believes in Me shall never die.'

That's a hope that will sustain and uphold us through even the most challenging times and it's my prayer for the people of Lancashire that many will make it their own this Easter.

John Bunyan, the writer of Pilgrim's Progress, said: 'Hope is never ill, when faith is well.'

And it is in that sense that I wish you all a very Happy Easter!