

What will make you happy? ...

... a reflection for Easter Day

A reflection for Easter Day, 20th April 2025, by the Vicar, the Revd Canon Jonathan Baker, in Beverley Minster.

John 20:1-18

I wonder if I can start with a question. What will make you happy? On Easter morning, it's possible chocolate might form part of the answer, but I'm looking slightly deeper than that. What will make you happy? In Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, there is a special mirror, the mirror of Erised. I don't know if there's any Harry Potter fans here this morning.

[Jonathan moves into the choir to solicit answers]

Yes. Can anybody tell me what the mirror of Erised does? What's special about it? Well, --- It shows you what you really want. Well done. Very good. The word Erised, of course, is desire spelt backwards. The mirror of Erised shows you your heart's deepest desire.....

[Jonathan returns to in front of the altar for the rest of his reflection]

That means it shows different things for different people: Harry Potter is an orphan; he has no parents and no family, and he longs to be part of a loving family; when he looks into the mirror of Erised, he sees his family all there waving at him, and he feels part of it. But his friend Ron, who is part of a very large and loving and rumbustious family, always feels a bit overlooked by his elder brothers. When he looks in the mirror of Erised, what he sees is himself being very important: he's head boy; he's captain of the team; he's won the Cricket Cup - because that's what he really desires.

In this morning's Easter reading, we see Jesus asking Mary two questions that are exploring what are her deepest desires. What is it she's really longing for? First of all, he says, "*Why are you weeping?*" In other words, what have you lost? What are you missing in your life? What are you so sad about through all those tears? Of course, it's fairly obvious to Mary she's lost Jesus. She's lost not just somebody who was a personal friend and someone she loved but somebody bigger than that. She thought Jesus would be the one who would rescue her people, that God was somehow working through Mary so she feels that sense of bigger loss of her people's hopes. Of course, as we look around the world today, there are a lot of people weeping, a lot of tears. We look at the destroyed communities in Gaza. We look at the wars grinding on in Ukraine and Sudan. All around the world, there are people weeping. Perhaps closer to home, too, there are tears: each of us will have things that have disappointed us; things that we've lost; something that makes us sad - for many of us, that will be there in our lives this Easter morning.

But Jesus follows that first question, why are you weeping? with the second question, "*What are you looking for?*" In other words, what will make you happy? What will put things right? What will take away this sense of sadness? What will make you satisfied and feel complete and fulfilled? You don't always know what it will be that will put things right and satisfy us - I love the story of the American billionaire, J. D. Rockefeller, who made a fortune out of oil round about the year 1900. He was the richest man in the world and somebody once asked him, "J. D, how much money would you have to have before you were satisfied?" Without missing a beat he said, "Just a little bit

more!" - which maybe suggests that his heart's desire was something that was never going to be satisfied, that he was maybe looking for the wrong thing because there was never going to be enough.

Now, the snag with the mirror of Erised is that what it shows isn't necessarily true. When Harry sees his family in the mirror, that doesn't mean he's going to see his family again because his parents are dead and nothing's going to bring them back. When Ron sees himself being terribly important, just because he sees it in the mirror of desire, it doesn't mean that that's true and that it's going to happen. And in the same way, when Mary weeps and when she's asked about her heart's desire, that doesn't necessarily mean she's going to see Jesus again. Mary thinks she's looking for a dead body, but she's not going to find it because Jesus is risen. Mary might think at a deeper level that she wants Jesus back, but one of the things this story says is that the risen Jesus isn't the same as he was before. For one thing, she doesn't recognise him at first - she thinks he's the gardener. So there's something different about him. Something has changed. And yet it's still Jesus.

Until Jesus calls Mary by name and says, "Mary!"

At that point, it's as if the mirror is shattered. She's no longer trapped in her illusions and fantasies of trying to get back something which has gone forever. Instead, she's confronted with the reality of the risen Lord who is promising to be with her forever and that means the future is going to be different because she's not going to be alone - Jesus is always going with her, and not even death can separate him from her. Mary sees not what she thought she wanted - she's not seeing a projection of her own longing - she's seeing the living Christ: Jesus is the same but different; transformed; not just with her in sorrow, but ahead of her in joy.

So the resurrection doesn't give us back what we've lost, and it doesn't necessarily give us our heart's desire, but it does give us the risen Christ to be with us forever. Jesus doesn't say he's going to fix our problems, but he does say we can never be separated from his love. And so if Christ is risen, we too have a different future; we too must change as we discover who we are, not by ourselves, but in relation with him - as we trust him and follow him our lives are different and they change. Jesus says to Mary, *"Don't hold on to me. I'm ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."* - so let go of the past with its fantasies and look forward to the future full of the love of God.

Sometimes it does feel as though we're in a hall of mirrors and everything is distorted and we're not quite sure what's really real - even our desires can deceive us. But at Easter it's as if the mirrors are smashed and at last we can see truly, because we see not by ourselves, but we see with the Lord who shows us who we really are and who promises that he will always be with us forever and ever.

Reading Text

John 2:1-18

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.