**Points of view**

In our journey toward Easter this year, the churches in our village joined together each week during Lent and one evening looked at a poem written by a fifteen year old boy, Kyle McCarty. Here is Kyle’s Poem:

*God doesn’t love me*

*You can’t force me to believe*

*God is good*

*This is the One Truth in life*

*This world is a product of chance*

*How can I believe that*

*God will use my life*

*I know with certainty that*

*God has left me*

*Never again will I say that*

*Christ is risen from the dead*

*I know now more than ever in my life that*

*Man can save himself*

*We must realize that it is ignorant to think*

[*God answers prayers*](https://finds.life.church/prayers-for-strength/)

*Christians declare that*

*Without God this world would fall into darkness*

*This world can and will meet my needs*

*It is a lie to say that*

*God has always been there for me*

*I now realize that*

*No matter what I do*

*The Truth is*

*He doesn’t love me*

*How can I presume that*

*God is good*

I don’t know how you respond to that, (you might want to hold those thoughts/emotions and explore them later in our silence) but I must admit I found it shocking and felt dismayed and a sense of gloom at the alienation and total disconnection from God expressed by one so young, with all his life stretched out before him.

There are many aspects of Jesus’ passion narrative that are also shocking and hard for us to handle: the venomous hatred, the conspiracy and manipulation, the collusion between the authorities; the false charges and sham trial; the fear, betrayal, abandonment and denial of friends and followers, the brutality and cruelty of humiliation, torture and execution. Human weakness is totally exposed all-round and the disciples are left shattered, their hopes and world broken. And we may well be shocked and dismayed when we see those forces still at work in our world in Gaza, Ukraine, in the Post Office, in our fumbling response to climate change to name but a few.

It took Easter morning and some considerable work thereafter for the disciples to grasp and accept that Jesus’ death wasn’t the whole story. Inevitably we understand and interpret what happens to us and in our world through lenses we have developed, our upbringing, education, experience, our national history, and cultures. Once established in us, these are not easily shifted.

As Richard Rohr has said:

‘Every viewpoint is a view from a point. Unless we recognize and admit our own personal and cultural viewpoints, we will never know how to decentralize our own perspective. One of the keys to wisdom is that we must recognize our own biases, our own addictive preoccupations, and those things to which, for some reason, we refuse to pay attention. Until we see these patterns, we will never be able to see what we do not see, we will only see things through a narrow keyhole. Only people who have done their inner work can see beyond their own biases to something transcendent, something that crosses the boundaries of culture and individual experience.’

The resurrection of Jesus on Easter morning made it possible for the disciples’ viewpoint to change and it still has the same capacity. It declared that whatever life throws at us even death, ultimately these do not have the last word. The resurrection of Jesus revealed that love is stronger than death. Jesus walked the way of death with love and what love becomes is not death but life. This is mystery, that what dies, may be reborn in love. God in Christ is saying this is what will last: my life and my love will have the final word, always.

It required not only Jesus’ resurrection but their ensuing encounters with the risen Jesus and the Holy Spirit to change the disciples’ viewpoint. But then the journey of faith for all of us is much easier said than it is done. The Christian practices of silence and contemplation in which we are engaged, help us give space and room for God, the risen Jesus to come to us, and gently move us towards liberating viewpoints on life and our relationship with Him that transform us in His love.

So, as we come again to silence together this evening, we invite the Holy Spirit of God to loosen the knots in our minds and spirits and for the presence and transforming power of the risen Jesus to bathe us in His transforming light, that our lives may continue to be renewed and expanded in His love.

**To lead us into silence** - we will read again Kyle’s poem but this time from another viewpoint – for reading it from the bottom casts a different light on this young man and how he sees!

**To lead us from silence** – (From the service of Compline)

Before the ending of the day,

Creator of the world, we pray

That you, with steadfast love, would keep

Your watch around us while we sleep.

From evil dreams defend our sight,

From fears and terrors of the night;

Tread underfoot our deadly foe

That we no sinful thought may know.

O Father, that we ask be done

Through Jesus Christ, your only Son;

And Holy Spirit, by whose breath

Our souls are raised to life from death. Amen.