

**Short intro to Online Service: Pott Shrigley 12 April 2020**

John 20.1-18 *Easter Morning*

'Very early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary went to the tomb'.

We'll hear those words later as part of our Bible reading; how Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' closest friends, visited his tomb as soon as she could – as soon as the Sabbath was over.

Well, it's just dawn on Easter Day here at Pott Shrigley, and I'm just outside our garden, and this.....is an old mine shaft. Fortunately, I don't have to be worried about falling into it, as long ago it was closed, sealed, capped with concrete: these markers are a familiar sight in the fields round here. No-one's going down that shaft anymore – and if anyone was unfortunate enough to be inside, they'd not be coming out, either!

Surely that's exactly how Mary must have viewed Jesus' tomb, which had been closed off and then sealed two days earlier. A place to visit and remember good times and a good friend, yes. But also a sign of how completely and utterly he was gone: the life, the hope, joy, purpose, peace and love she found in him, now closed off to her, sealed off, forever.

It wasn't just the stone over the mouth of the cave which kept him from her. It was death itself. Death, the ultimate lockdown, had robbed her of a dear and beloved person – and many of us know how that feels.

And, unlike *our* current lockdown, this one, death, was irreversible; it would never be lifted...

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...at least, that's what Mary thought. And it's what you and I would have thought, too.

In our service this morning, we'll celebrate the extraordinary promise that death no longer has the last word: we'll celebrate Jesus' Resurrection, his breaking open of the tomb – of death itself.

We'll celebrate how wrong Mary was! And how wrong we are when we think that, with God, death can ever have the last word....

Alleluia, Christ is risen

**He is risen indeed, alleluia**