



**A sermon for Festal Evensong at Wells Cathedral,  
preached on Sunday 5 April by the Reverend Dr  
Kate Bruce, RAF Chaplain**

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## **Easter Day Evensong**

*Song of Solomon 3:2-5 & 8:6-7 and Revelation 1: 12-18*

The invitation in these Holy week sermons has been: 'Moving Deeper into Love.'  
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The Song of Songs is a celebration of physical love, unabashed in its eroticism, and celebration of sexual desire.

The text paints a picture of a woman deeply in love. Her love is more than physical. It consumes all she is. Three times she refers to her beloved as '*the one whom my soul loves.*'

Her determined desire to find her lover is striking. She is bold, clear and focussed. I wonder if our response to divine love is somewhat anaemic in comparison! On Easter Day, as we ponder this woman seeking her love, we might think of a different woman in another story – (John 20) also seeking the one she loves. Mary Magdalene running about, looking for the one she has doubly lost. Jesus – her beloved friend is dead. She is desperate to find his body, thinking the grave has been robbed, trying to do the dignified thing with his remains. Courageous woman.

Both women find their heart's desire. The woman in the Song of Songs finds fulfilment through sexual love. For her this love, this union, is as potent a matter as death itself, but it is not more powerful than death. It will end. It will finally come to its own full stop.

If the love expressed in the Song of Songs seems pretty wild, then - buckle up! There is a greater love, a love stronger than death. A love fiercer than the grave. A love that holds the keys of Death.

In the reading from Revelation, John describes a strange figure, 'One like a Son of Man', recognisably human – and yet different, other. John's vision is of Jesus the Risen One. On seeing him, John is afraid. He ends up face down on the floor, 'as if dead'. Utterly overwhelmed. Who wouldn't be?

And yet ... this one like a Son of Man placed his right hand on John and said: *'Do not be afraid.'* Touch and reassurance. Connection and warmth. How wonderful! Jesus's otherness – his magnificent appearance, speaking of immense power, is combined with such gentle kindness. Remember this as you ponder your response to the invitation into deeper love. The Immense power of Jesus the Risen One who acts with gentle kindness and reassurance. There is no need to be afraid of anything because he says:

*I am the first and the last, and the living one, I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.'*

There is much we fear. Our own daily struggles. The little deaths of life. The passing years. Ill health. Bereavement and loss. Loneliness. The existential angst - each time we scroll the news. A million anxious 'what ifs?'

Into all this Jesus comes, He meets us in unexpected places. Just as Mary discovered in the garden in the early morning light, when the one she thought dead speaks her name. Her grief is transformed to joy and new purpose: *'Go and tell.'*

Jesus meets us – in surprising places. Just like John – who met Jesus in a vision, whilst in exile on a rocky island in the Aegean Sea. A vision in a hard place. It becomes the book of Revelation. Some of which you heard read aloud today.

Jesus meets us in the bleak and barren places. In grief. In sadness. In trouble. Do not be afraid. He meets us in distress and trauma – just ask Mary Magdalene. He meets us when fear has taken us out at the knees. Just ask John.

He meets us with a love stronger than death. Death - the shadow hanging over all life is no shadow to Him, the first fruits from the dead. Do not be afraid. Be expectant.

Be expectant because this Easter-love beckons us today. Inviting us into deeper relationship. Deeper connection. Deeper Intimacy. Deeper truth.

You can bring all that you are in trust and honesty, all joy, all pain, all sorry mess, to the one who holds the keys of death. He lays his right hand upon you and says, *'Do not be afraid.'*

This Easter - move deeper into love. That's the invitation. Deeper into relationship with Jesus Christ. Amen

The Reverend Dr Kate Bruce  
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