

From death to new life. That's the image at the heart of our gospel reading this week.

...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12.24)

Jesus was speaking about his own death, trying to prepare the disciples for the fate that awaited him in Jerusalem.

Following Jesus means participating in his life, death and resurrection. That's Jesus' message for the disciples and the Greeks. If they want to see Jesus, then death must be confronted because death comes before resurrection.

Over the next two weeks (Passiontide in the church's year) we are invited to walk the way of the cross with Jesus.

It wasn't an easy journey for him and it won't be an easy journey for us after a year in which so many have died.

Many of us are bearing burdens of sorrow and grief.

All of us have been walking through the valley of the shadow of death, and we are not yet out of it.

Yet Christ walks that journey with us, sharing our darkness.

And ultimately, as the grain of wheat reminds us, it is a journey through death to life.

Jesus' death would bring life in all sorts of ways.

It might look like a defeat. It might look as though the forces of violence and evil and despair had won.

But in that death were the seeds of forgiveness, hope, courage, love and goodness that would change the world.

They cannot be destroyed because they are much stronger than the things that oppose them.

Every time they are buried, they break out again in new ways.

There can be no resurrection without a death, and when the disciples try to avoid it, they are proclaiming its grip stronger than God, more real than life and the ultimate victor.

In the words of today's collect,

grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**