

Restoration Ministries



He Restores My Soul - Easter 2021

Dear Friends,

A couple of weeks ago I heard of a bird, a rare species called the Regent Honeyeater that used to be prolific in South Eastern Australia but is now endangered. This bird, probably due to isolation from its own kind, had lost its song, had forgotten how to sing. It was almost as if it had forgotten what made it unique, what singled it out as being special. I felt quite sad.

And then I got to thinking, “That’s the way many of us have been feeling over the past months. Everybody has their own particular story of how this last year has been. It’s as if we are entombed between Good Friday and Easter Day. I have a friend who says that when we finally emerge from this we’re all going to be a bit odd! We’ll have forgotten how to relate face to face! In our isolation from the rest of human-

kind, from our own species, we have become a little bit like the Regent Honeyeater. At times it seems as if we’ve lost our song; we’ve forgotten the essence of what makes us human; we’ve forgotten how to sing the song of faith and hope and love. We’ve been questioning our identity, and we feel disorientated and alone. Will we ever return to ‘normal’? Who is going to roll away this stone for us – for it is a very large stone?



On that first Easter, very early in the morning three women are making their way to the tomb into which the body of Jesus had been placed a couple of days before. The Saturday has been a long wait. Clinging on to the last shreds of what had been, they are now going to anoint his dead body. Jesus was dead and what was left to give their lives meaning anymore; so short a time to lose their

song! On the way it suddenly hits them that they will not be able to roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb. They arrive at the place and are stopped in their tracks by an amazing sight. Someone has got there before them and has already rolled the stone away. There follows their discovery of an empty tomb and the

encounter with the messenger who tells them, “He isn’t here! He has been raised from the dead.” If they were anything like me, probably all they heard was? “He isn’t here!” The ultimate cruelty; they weren’t even given the chance to anoint his body, the only thing left for them to do for him. We, too, don’t expect to witness eternity breaking into time in the form of a heavenly messenger. The God of surprises hasn’t shown up for a long time, and this past year has increased that sense of lostness and

despair. We hanker after the past, to go back to what was familiar, to a way of doing things that was probably not always comfortable, but was the world we knew – if you like, to anoint the body. It is as if this last year has been in a strange way given to us as a sort of liminal space before we cross over to a new world. We have had to wait, whether we liked it or not. A few weeks ago on an archaeological programme, I saw a sign for visitors, “This way to the past”. I am not dismissing the past. It is what our today is built upon and holds many treasures. But surely there is also an invisible sign, “This way to the future”? My waiting in this space hasn’t always been great. Some days I allow isolation and despair to gain the upper hand. At other moments I can see beyond and can almost hear the faint first notes of a new song. I couldn’t put words on the song but it is something like the groanings Paul writes about in Romans 8. The three women on that early Sunday morning were actually walking towards the future, even though at that moment they weren’t aware of it. And I have the feeling that we are too! ‘He is not

here’ can either feed our despair or cause us to lift up our hearts with excitement, expectation and joy!

As they received the amazing message, those women became in themselves the Church. They didn’t have a building, but they had a song. Could it be for us that the groanings of this past year are the first notes of the song that is already being sung in the eternal now of God, a now that is filled with hope and promise? We have not forgotten or lost our song; we are simply re-discovering it. We are an Easter people. We will live the future in the present. We will let go of what is no longer necessary and embrace the first fruits of a new day. The stone has already been rolled away. He is risen. He goes ahead of us. He will be with us to the end which is also a beginning. Alleluia is our song! This way to the future!

Ruth



RIP

Etta Hughes, a dear friend of Restoration Ministries, died on December 10, 2020. Etta had many gifts, all stemming from her life of faith. Chief among these were her prayer life and her warm hospitality. From the very beginning she was part of the welcome and the prayer life of Restoration House, until increasing frailty prevented her from being physically present with us. We extend our sympathy to Elva and Alastair and all the beloved members of her family circle.

To all our friends in Restoration Ministries far and near, please know that you are always remembered with deep gratitude. We trust that you have managed to remain safe and well during this strange time. We wish you all the peace and joy of Easter.

With love and prayers,
Ruth and Rose

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