Alleluia! Christ is risen! God has given us a great big present today. I wonder if there is someone in the congregation who would like to help me open this parcel and find out what it is? [unpack parcel and discover organ donor card]

For those of you who can't see, what's in the parcel is an organ donor card. Give the gift of life, they say. And life is what all the world has been given today, because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. But there are a few differences between Jesus and an organ donor. For one thing, the organ donor has to die in order for someone else to be able to have their heart, or their kidney, or whatever the organ is. And so while one family is happy because the person they love can live and get better, another family is sad because the person they love has died.

But although Jesus dies in order for someone else to live, Jesus comes alive again, and that is what we celebrate today. The Christian family is sad on Good Friday because that is the day when Jesus died on the cross so that no-one else would have to die forever. I don't mean that nobody ever dies; anybody can see that's not true. But nobody has to die forever: death is temporary, that is the message of Easter. So we are sad on Good Friday, but sad only because it was such a hard thing to have to go through, the terrible suffering of having to be crucified. We are glad as well, because we are so grateful that Jesus loved us so much that he was willing to do this for us. Good Friday means that whatever bad things we do, even if we've harmed someone else badly or had to go to prison, if we tell God we're sorry and try to turn our life around, then everything is OK. In a mysterious way, because Jesus freely chose to die on Good Friday, that took away the effect of all the evil in the world. It's still there but its eternal consequences are taken away. Without Good Friday, the evil things I do destroy my soul; but because of Jesus, I can make a fresh start.

And then comes Easter morning, and we can let go of sadness and celebrate. Today we know in advance that Easter is coming, but we read the story in the Gospels to remind ourselves how depressed and hopeless the disciples were feeling. Jesus had told them that he would be crucified and then rise from the dead, but they hadn't taken it in. They thought all their hopes had been destroyed. And then early in the morning, Mary Magdalen came to the tomb in order to weep, and had a strange encounter with a man she didn't recognise at first. She thought he was the gardener, and then he spoke to her, and she recognised Jesus. Although he had really died, the power of God was stronger than death and raised him to life again. She was amazed, the disciples were amazed, and some of them found it hard to take it in. From despair to unbelievable joy, in one moment, because all the promises of God are true. Jesus is alive for ever. And his gift to us this Easter morning is that the same can be true for us. We will all have to die just as he did. But just as he did, we will be raised from the dead and live with him for ever.

No-one can say exactly how it works. No-one can prove it happens. What we are asked to do is to choose to trust God and believe that he will do what he promises. We are free not to do it, but if we do choose to trust God, then life becomes ten times more meaningful. When sad things happen, as they do to everyone, we can be comforted because we won't have to grieve forever. When hard things happen, we can be strong because we trust that God is faithful and will see us through. And when we're happy, we can rejoice with the whole world, because that is only a tiny taste of what eternal life in heaven with God will be like.

And all of this is given to us free. We don't have to pay for it, we don't have to earn it, we just have to open our hands and accept it from God with thankfulness. Today two children are going to be given this gift of eternal life. By being baptised, they become part of God's family, part of the Body of Christ. Every baptised person is mysteriously a part of Jesus Christ, and so they live for ever because he lives for ever. And it's good to be baptised on Easter Day, because today every Christian remembers their own baptism and promises again to believe in God and turn away from evil. Like renewing your wedding vows, it's a way to celebrate all the good things that have already happened in your relationship with God, and to say again that this is where you want to be, for the future, for ever; and God says the same to you today. Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift of life, and glory to Jesus Christ who gives us life instead of death. Alleluia! Amen.