

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Easter 2

Collect:

Almighty Father,

You have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth;

Through the merits of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, Amen.

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

Acts 2:14a 22-32 Psalm 16 1Peter 1:3-9 **John 20:19-31**

In writing and reading may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Our gospel passage today is written from three different points of time. First and account of Jesus' appearance to his disciples in the upper room on the day of resurrection. Those there rejoice in his presence and offering them his peace and giving them his Spirit he commissions them to share the mission – the outpouring of God's love – in which the Father has sent him.

The next story is set a week later, when, those same disciples are still behind shut doors. This time Thomas is with them. Thomas who was missing from the group when Jesus appeared on Easter day, was understandably unwilling to believe something as impossible as Jesus' resurrection from the dead without seeing it for himself. Jesus meets him in that state of mind and shows him what he needs to see in order to belief and Thomas utters a statement not only of belief in the resurrection, but also belief in what it confirms

to be true of Jesus: "My Lord and my God"! The time and exploration that Thomas has demanded, and Jesus has given him, has brought him to a depth of belief, a wisdom drawn from all that he has live through, that only time can offer.

Finally in this passage the writer reminds us that all that we have read is written with hindsight. Stories have been selected from many that could have been told of the risen Lord Jesus appearing to his friends "so that you may come to believe:

- that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God
- that through believing you may have life in his name"

For me, what this gospel offers us today is a reflection on the significance of time in coming to understanding, belief and wisdom; the significance of time in the way God's grace works in us to bring us into fullness of life in God's own time. Wherever we are on the journey of grappling with belief in Jesus' resurrection there is a place for us in this story, and an assurance that Jesus will give us the time and the signs that we need to move more deeply into the belief in and love of him that brings us to life and commissions us to share his love with the world.

When we look closely at the story we notice that even though Jesus appeared to his disciples on Easter day, calmed their fears and commissioned them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, very little has changed for them by the time Jesus returns a week later. They are still behind a locked door. Even for those who have believed and rejoiced immediately it takes time for what they have experienced to become the source of life for all that they will become.

In some ways Thomas' questioning gives all the disciples the opportunity to meet Jesus again and go more deeply with Thomas into a realisation that their friend, risen from the dead, truly is the Son of God. And Jesus, almost looking out of the story, directly at us, blesses us: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe".

“Who have come to believe”: Jesus talks of this as a process, a journey, and the evangelist picks this up. He writes that we may “Come to believe” and through believing “may have life”. In other words, what is being offered here is not just a mental assent to the words we say at the end of the creed, but a belief that so shapes who we are, how we live and how we look at the world that we know the fullness of life that God creates us all for. The life we see restored in Jesus shows us his divinity and in turn reveals to us God’s life in us, and in the life of the whole of creation. This transformation of how we see the world, how we live in the world, how we know ourselves to be who we truly are: God’s beloved ones is a life long journey. It takes even longer than the week between Easter Day and today, the next Sunday after Easter.

Thomas is often called “doubting Thomas” but I think we could also call him “patient Thomas”, he was prepared to accept the discomfort of not knowing, not having the answers, not saying he believed what he didn’t yet, and to wait on God so he could speak the truth when expressing his new found conviction in what became a profound first act of witness to Jesus’ lordship and divinity. He was really honest with himself and his friends about his relationship with Jesus, and in that honesty Jesus could draw him into fuller and deeper love and worship.

So my question for each of us today, is where are we in the story today? Who are we in the house with shut doors a week after Easter?

Are we one of the disciples who was able to rejoice a week ago and have been treasuring the joy of knowing that Jesus is risen from the dead?

Are we like Thomas grappling with whether or not this could actually have happened, and what to make of it if it has?

Or are we like Thomas later in the story, having come through uncertainly and doubt, beginning glimpse what it means to worship “our Lord and our God” the one who fully man and fully God, suffering and dying for our sake and rising to bring us the fullness of eternal life with God?

Are we the ones blessed by Jesus because we have come to believe without seeing?

Are we the ones who tell the stories of resurrection so others might come to share in its joy?

Are we those who believe and know that the resurrection we celebrate brings us new life in all its fullness?

Or are we a mixture of these?

Each of us, in our own way is behind a shut door, this week later than Easter Day. Wherever we are in the story, may we hear Jesus coming to us with words of his peace, and in return may we, like Thomas, bring him honesty about our own journey of believing, asking him for what we need to grow in faith or wisdom and to open ourselves to the life and love he was sent to share.

Amen.