

BIBLICAL REFLECTION *for Easter 2 (19 April)* **Acts 2:14 + 22-32 (+ Psalm 16)**

I wonder who Peter's audience was. We are always assuming that the great revelation of Mary Magdalene's discovery of Jesus' resurrection, and the subsequent 'visits' by the Risen Christ to numerous disciples, had convincing powers over everyone else, but I wonder if it did? Who is Peter talking to? Is the author of Acts using a descriptive method to bring alive the resurrection motif, or is there a genuine gathering of folk fascinated by such news?

We have no way of knowing – and the future of this tale of triumph over alleged evil is to forever rely upon the stories being taken up by countless believers and followers and passed through the generations. Our role is to perform exactly the same task. We believe. We witness. We bring alive, as best we can, our interpretation of events from long ago – events we are convinced still resonate in our current times. We are, if you like, in that audience, listening to that man. So, what are we hearing?

Well, at first, we are hearing a telling-off! We have done wrong, it says. We sent someone to his death who really should not have needed killing. We have not taken on-board who he was. We have not listened. We perhaps thought we knew better. Peter is trying to convince us that this character called Jesus of Nazareth was not merely an itinerant preacher, but was of infinite value to society, whose whole *raison d'être* was governed by none less than God Himself. Quite who our fellow audience members are we cannot really tell – but we do know who we are, and the question is: what message are we receiving from Peter's statement?

Like the people of first-century Palestine, we are all-too-aware of the reported story of that first Easter, so the facts are nothing new. As Peter says, why on earth would you kill someone who had, in previous moments, provided endless examples – through teaching, healing, support, etc. – of the profound love and power of God, something which the given faith of the day (i.e. the Hebrew teaching) had constantly expounded? If looking for evidence of hope, why was "hope" destroyed? Perhaps the people preferred abstract over reality?

Sometimes we just cannot always deal with the 'blindingly obvious'. Society is made up of a myriad of thoughts, theories, objectives, opinions – we none of us can claim superior power or knowledge, however much some think they can. In a democratic frame of mind, each should be able to co-exist, but when the balance becomes skewed, then trouble can brew. Suddenly, people are over-powerful, others are afraid. How to right this imbalance?

The Early Disciples' task – as we have grown to realise through the stories of Acts and similar – was to attempt this righting of alleged wrong. Standing up and proclaiming becomes the pattern; becomes a threat to others who would prefer not to hear it; becomes evidence of hope. The

resurrection motif is kept alive by such action. We keep the resurrection alive by ours. At least, I hope we do, otherwise celebrating Easter becomes a pointless waste of time.

This year, of all years, we most definitely want to see 'resurrection' occur. We want to see hope restored. We have just been put under 'house arrest' for yet another three week period by this virus. Tiresome. Annoying. Frustrating. And dull. But, it is part of a process that we are led to believe will bring about 'resurrection' in its broadest sense – and when it does, we as believers need to ensure that the Risen Christ also has chance to be restored alongside re-opened shops, increased activity, restored equilibrium.

Peter uses the beautiful writings of the Psalms to illustrate his hope. He takes from Psalm 16 a visionary moment that has the power of God so firmly in the life of the author of that psalm, an author (perhaps David?) who, at the beginning of the psalm, says that he takes refuge with God. Refuge from whatever is before him – and refuge which in verses 8-11 has the convincing sense of almighty protection and hope. "You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore." We need a bit of that right now – so hold on!

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