

Lord, take my words and speak through them. Take our thoughts and think through them. Take our hearts and set them on fire with the Holy Spirit. Amen

Please take your seats

Five years ago, my husband, Francois, and I took the biggest leap of faith of our lives: we left the lives that we knew, our friends, our home and we moved 6000 miles from South Africa to the United Kingdom. I sold my little accounting practice, entrusting my loyal clients into the hands of another. We ruthlessly decluttered, donating truck loads of goods and chattels to St Andrew's annual fundraising spring fair. We organised a farewell party that doubled up as a 50th Birthday party for me. We shed a tear over leaving the flat we had called home for 13 years, and set off on a two week holiday, driving through the beautiful country that is South Africa, saying goodbye to family and friends. Finally, we climbed onto a plane to start a new life, A Big Adventure. It was the end of life as we knew it and a whole new beginning.

One of the biggest, and possibly the hardest parts of our move from the Southern Hemisphere to the North was how relationships changed. One one hand, we moved closer to two of my brothers who live here. Now, instead of having long phone or video calls with them, we can meet up and do things together. Christmas is now a rowdy affair of 15 around the table instead of the much smaller contingent we were used to. On the other hand, we left behind family and friends. Friends that we would meet for a BBQ, or braai. Families we went camping with, making memories of singeing slippers while keeping warm around a campfire. And for all the good intentions and the modern technology, keeping in touch often just isn't as easy as it seems. Our relationships have changed, although we will always remain friends, of that I am sure.

Come to think of it, I think I have an inkling of how the disciples must have felt as they grappled with what Jesus was trying to tell them. Since the beginning of Jesus' adult ministry, these men had walked with him. They ate together, they laughed and cried together. They had heard all that Jesus had preached and watched him perform miracles. Jesus was the centre of their world, and he was telling them that he would not be with them for very much longer. They could not comprehend what their lives might be like without him. They were full of questions about where he might be going and why they could not go with him. They wanted to know how they would find him again. The idea that Jesus would no longer physically be with them each and every day was earth shattering. Life as they knew it was about to end.

But that is not all Jesus was trying to tell them. "Do not let your hearts be troubled", he said. I wonder, if you were one of the disciples, would you have been able to take on board the assurances that Jesus was trying to give his loyal followers and companions? I think I would still have been trying to digest the bit about him no longer being around. Jesus perseveres though. Although he was leaving them, this wasn't the end. It was a new beginning.

It took some time before the disciples came to understand what we in the 21st century know: it is possible to have a relationship with Jesus even though he is not with us in the flesh. In this farewell speech, Jesus urges his followers to believe in God and to believe in him. He suggests that he and his father are one. "If you know me, you will know my father". Coming to earth as a flesh and blood human being allowed the disciples to get to know Jesus personally and intimately. And in knowing Jesus, they also know God, the Father. In the same way, it is through our belief in and love of Jesus that we come to know the Father.

Jesus told the disciples that his words and works were not his own but came from the Father. He went on to say that anyone who believes in him will do the works that he did. Jesus did many wonderful and miraculous deeds, and I am sure you are wondering how it is possible that we, sitting here today, might be able to do even a tiny bit of what Jesus did. It sounds a bit overwhelming. If we think about what Jesus did in another way though, we can see that everything was to the glory of God. His human life on earth was about bringing an understanding of God to us that we could grasp and believe in, in a personal way. And in believing in him, he is asking us to share that understanding with others. Working miracles is possible, anything is possible with the power of God. Working for the Glory of God is even greater. Sharing his word, sharing the love of Jesus is the ultimate mission.

But even that can sometimes feel daunting. Many things that God asks us to do are daunting. Writing this sermon was daunting. Jesus said that the one who believes in him will do these works. He is not asking us to go out there alone. He is asking us to live in relationship with him and in the power of that relationship, we can achieve many things that we cannot achieve in our strength alone.

Like the disciples, King Charles had been at The Queen's side for many years. They ate together, laughed and cried together, and he'd watched as she'd led the country as Head of State. His life as Prince of Wales, King in waiting ended on the 8th of September and a new life began.

King Charles has had many years to prepare for this role but now it is here. His time has come. Great things are expected of him. As Defender of the Faith, King Charles must first and foremost be a disciple of Christ. Just like you, just like me. We are called to live out our faith in word and deed, carrying on the work of Jesus. But we are not called to do that alone, just as The King is not called to fulfil his role alone.

As Jesus is about to leave his disciples and followers, the form of their relationship changes. From being a relationship that centres on being together physically every day, it goes to one that relies on the faith and understanding of the disciples that although Jesus is no longer with them in the flesh, he is still very much a part of their lives.

This is the relationship we have with Jesus. He is not with us in the flesh, but he is very much a part of our lives. We feel his presence so much more when we spend time with him, when we take time out to sit in the quiet with his word, to sit in prayer reaching out to the Father through him. And in that quiet, we hear him speak to us.

As King Charles formally takes up his reign this weekend, his relationship with Jesus must be a great comfort to him. Faith was an integral part of the life of The Queen before him. "I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God!" In the same way, in his coronation service, King Charles said, "In His name and after His example, I come, not to be served but to serve". May King Charles relationship with Jesus Christ provide the same strength and support to him as it did to his mother.

Let us pray: Lord God, in your power you provide for your people and rule over them in love: Grant to your servant Charles, our King, the spirit of wisdom and government, that being devoted to you with his whole heart, he may so wisely govern, that during his reign your church may be protected, and Christian devotion may continue in peace;

that so persevering in good works to the end, he may by your mercy enter your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ **Amen.**