

Sunday 18th April

Third Sunday of Easter

Bible Reading

Luke 24:35-48

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognised him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

'Why are you frightened?' he asked. 'Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do.' As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Still, they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched.

Then he said, 'When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said, 'Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' You are witnesses of all these things.

Reflection

What an appropriate reading for us to have in the lectionary today, given the different things that have gone on in the past week. Firstly, we had the death of Prince Philip to come to terms with, then on Monday the re-opening of shops, outside seating at pubs and restaurants, and importantly, hairdressers - for which I am so grateful!!!! Then yesterday after a week of reflection upon

the remarkable life of Prince Philip and the Queen, the funeral of the Prince took place amid Covid secure arrangements. A huge range of different emotions and memories for us to experience.

In our reading today we find that the two disciples who had walked the road back to Emmaus had experienced all sorts of emotions too. They then share those experiences and the emotions of that walk and encounter with Jesus with their friends, trying to make sense of it all when –pow—Jesus is again suddenly standing in their midst. Talk about confusing.

So much to take in, the landscape has changed and now the ghost of Jesus is stood in their midst. Whatever next! Note that the whole group was filled with fear and it takes time for Jesus to convince them all that it really is him and all that he had been telling them before his crucifixion had in fact been true and was now fulfilled. They can be emboldened by these facts rather than fearful, and therefore able to go and be witnesses to all that has happened and proclaim Jesus as Lord of all wherever they go, and whenever opportunity gives them the chance.

Today we are the witnesses to the amazing truth of the resurrection, showing God's love and power over evil and death. As our patterns and routines of life have changed over the past year and will continue to change, we search for whatever a new normal may look like. One thing is certain, we will have many new and exciting opportunities to share our faith with people. Just when people were becoming weighed down with a sense of hopelessness for the church, the last year has seen a renewed interest in Christianity, and new people have joined online offerings from churches, whether live or pre-recorded. The question now is, as it was to those disciples when Jesus appeared in their midst, what are we to do about it? Jesus' message was: 'You know the truth about me, and I have taught you everything written about me. Now go in my authority and if you have eyes to see, and hearts to know, go where I am leading and be my witnesses to this generation in ways that they can hear and experience my love. Tell your stories of faith and life, show love and service, and allow the Holy Spirit to do the rest.'

Let us go in peace and joy to follow wherever Jesus leads.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the gift of faith. That through these troubled times your love is constant and that through it we have glimpses of the kingdom of

heaven here on earth. We give thanks for our church community and all that it means to each one of us. Help us to be ready and willing to step into the new places you are leading us and to share the love of God with all we meet this day and always. Amen.

A Meditation on Joy written during my Sabbatical



On reflection I think I have lived my life ready to take advantage of each opportunity that has presented itself and an ability to see each day as a new beginning. I am generally a happy person and in truth easily contented with my lot. I have never chased the big money or latest must-have gadget and do

not envy or want what others have. This is not to say that there have not been dark times in my life. Being bullied at school, a marriage breakdown, and most of all the death of my son Richard. However, I have come to realise that the joy of life and living is deep within and is not dependant on a tick list of achievements or what others think of us. From earliest years I had a curiosity of the world around me and an excitement about what each day might bring, taking pleasure in each opportunity that presented itself and the simple pleasures of life.

I still have those same feelings of the six-year-old child today. Some might say I have never grown up, but I prefer to see it as still in awe and wonder at God's world and still being on a voyage of discovery and feeling the joy this brings. I am a great believer that God wants us to be a joyful people who can enjoy and revel in all he provides day by day. Who knows it may even make us more attractive people to be around and our churches vibrant joy filled communities!!!! As I walk through the rest of my life I will give thanks for the gift of joy and laughter that so enhance the lives we lead.