

A Service for Easter Sunday, 19 April 2020

Rev'd Canon Leigh Richardson – Sub-Dean

On Sunday mornings after Easter when the BBC1 Sunday Worship Service does not come from St Davids Cathedral (the next are on May 17 and June 7), the clergy team will take turns to produce a short service of reading, reflection and prayers, which will be posted on YouTube and social media. They will also produce a written summary of the service, which can be shared with those who don't have access to the internet. Here is the edited version by Rev'd Canon Leigh Richardson

The amazing thing about the bible is that it often speaks right to the very heart of our situation just at the right time. We're full of fear at the moment, frightened by everything that's happening around us, fearful for our loved ones and for what the future might bring.

We're shut away from our friends and family, and the world seems to be spinning out of control and into this world that Jesus brings his peace, his shalom. The disciples were fearful, hidden away in the upper room, the world that they knew had been turned upside down and they were scared for their lives, and yet the peace that Jesus brings has a quality about it that's more than just wishful thinking – it's a resurrection peace, a knowledge that Jesus overcame the violence and injustice of the world.

Within moments, the disciples' sadness was turned into joy, we're told that 'the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord' – and the joy that they felt, just like the peace that Jesus brings had a quality about it that ran deeper than just happiness.

The writer CS Lewis said that we're 'half-hearted creatures, fooling about ... when infinite joy is offered to us... We are far too easily pleased.'

And its at times like this when we yearn for what we had, perhaps missing our freedom a bit and the things that we used to do without thinking, wishing we'd shown more appreciation for the little things that Jesus can make a difference and enable us to move on from here – and he says to the disciples a second time, 'peace be with you' but he goes further this time, moving the disciples on, 'as the father sends me, I am sending you'

Really, its all call to action, to get up and to not despair - Jesus had left the glory of heaven to come to earth to reconcile human beings to God, so the disciples had to leave the security, if that is what it was, of their locked room. They forsook the security of their homes, families and careers to live for Jesus and minister in his name.

And we too are called to leave our 'comfort zones' to minister for Jesus. The church is called the 'body of Christ' with all of us being different, all of us contributing to the well being of the body.

So what stops us making that move to accept the peace and the joy and the forgiveness that Jesus brings – well quite often its because we just don't believe it – and here into the situation we have Thomas. There's always one person who is out of the room when the winning try is scored, usually its me, but its Thomas misses seeing Jesus on that first Easter Day and he doesn't believe the other disciples – its eight days later, and they're all still locked away in the house, still – but this time Thomas is there,

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas was a straight speaking northerner. He'd told Jesus earlier that he didn't understand what he was talking about "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" He was convinced that Jesus was dead and didn't believe the testimony of the other disciples. He was sceptical. He wanted proof for himself.

We can't "see" like Thomas did but that does not mean that our faith is false or that we have to leave our brains behind when we come to faith and when we come to church. I actually think Thomas is another reason to believe that the resurrection is true.

So if we can make that leap of faith then we can take the metaphorical leap over the walls of our confinement – they don't have to define us, because through our faith we are blessed and if blessed then we can receive the transforming peace, the shalom of Christ that passes all understanding, the forgiveness and the joy that knowing him brings and a new desire to live for him.