

Reflection

For 11.04.21 – Easter 2

By Sally Clifton



11.04.21 – Easter 2 – A reflection on Acts 4.32-35, Psalm 113, 1 John 1.1-2.2, John 20.19-end.

Poor Old Thomas, every year we re-live his disbelief, and for many years I have had to preach on it! What more can be said about him? We all know that the simple truth is Thomas could not believe until he had the experienced Jesus' resurrection for himself.

I just want to take you back to a few days before Easter to the time when Jesus told his disciples that he was going to see Mary and Martha after the death of Lazarus.

Thomas was both pragmatic and pessimistic. He knew that Jesus was walking into a dangerous situation, yes, he understood that Jesus wanted to comfort the sisters, but surely, common sense dictated you stay away. Thomas, the prophet, could see that Jesus was heading for the cross but, out of love for his teacher he said, 'Let us also go, that we might die with him; for Thomas was also courageous.

I wonder where Thomas was when he wasn't with the disciples after the crucifixion? Why was he the only one who didn't see Jesus. It wasn't because he was a poor disciple, on the contrary, he supported Jesus and stayed with him, until, like all of the others (except the disciple Jesus loved) he stayed away for the last hours of Jesus' life. Maybe it was because he lost hope, he understood that the cross meant death and that was final. Or maybe it was because Thomas who had been a carpenter, chose to work through his grief by working hard.

Perhaps he couldn't face being with the others? He might not have felt able to cope with their grief as well as his own. Or maybe he was angry that this terrible disaster had happened when it might have been avoided or at least delayed for a little while longer.

We can all recognise these feelings, either because we have experienced them ourselves or because we know people who have reacted in this way.

Then to be told that Jesus had appeared to everyone, that he was, in fact alive. It was too much for Thomas, the realist, to deal with. He wanted the evidence, he wanted to touch the wounds. He had to wait another 8 days before he was able to have the confirmation he needed.

I suppose we could ask the question, why did Jesus not meet with him before? He was able to simply appear in the middle of everyone in a locked room, why didn't he show himself to Thomas, after all he was meeting with lots of other people – think of the walk on the road to Emmaus. I wonder if this is Jesus living out a parable.

Reflection

For 11.04.21 – Easter 2

By Sally Clifton



The one outstanding feature of our Christian faith is that we are a community of believers. Paul called his followers to be the body of Christ here on earth. Individually gifted, working together as a whole, each one dependent on the other for the continued success of the group. Peter called the people a Holy Priesthood.

Jesus did nothing on his own apart from the time he spent in prayer with his Father God, and then he wasn't alone! He was always surrounded by his disciples, especially Peter, James and John. Our Gospel reading tells us that Jesus said, 'as the Father sent me, so I send you. Not individually but together, supporting, encouraging, comforting one another. Even when the disciples went their separate ways to spread the good news, they had companions. Paul had Luke, Timothy, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark and plenty of others to support him on his three missionary journeys.

But Thomas, unable to join the others, was out on his own. Thomas discovered the hard way that avoiding the rest of the disciples meant that he was shutting himself off from the support and companionship that might have helped him to combat the pain and confusion of grief. And ultimately, not being with them meant that he was unable to share in the joy of Christ's resurrection when they did. It was a timely lesson then and it is still relevant to us today.

We have spent the past year separated from our communities, yet we couldn't face the total isolation that was being asked of us. So, we waved at people through windows, we had time in our gardens when we could at least shout to people over the fence, or we went for walks so that we could at least glimpse real people.

We could watch the telly and listen to the radio, we collected shopping for those who couldn't get out and the food bank made deliveries. Thankfully, we had technology that enabled us to speak on telephones, meet on 'Zoom' and or 'Microsoft Teams'. We could watch and engage with church services on 'Youtube' and 'Facebook' apps. We were physically apart but for many of us, we did not have to be completely alone unless we chose to shut ourselves off from the world. Yet with all that stuff we had access to, many people still suffered from mental health issues because we, as a species, are not much good at being physically distanced from one another.

I read a story about an elderly gentleman whose wife had died. He withdrew into himself, stopped going out and stopped going to church. He refused to see family and friends. Then the vicar went in.

He sat next to the elderly man and said nothing apart from a brief greeting. The two men sat together for a long time, neither saying anything. The fire burned in the grate and a

Reflection

For 11.04.21 – Easter 2

By Sally Clifton



coal fell from it. The coal glowed red then gradually cooled until it was no longer on fire. The vicar picked the coal up with a pair of tongs, put it back in the centre of the burning mass, watched it flare back into life and, with a brief prayer, left. The elderly man went back to church the next Sunday.

We need one another in order to be fully the people God planned us to be. We need to live and work together, with all the joys and difficulties that presents us with. We need be sharing our many gifts so that our community grows thrives, and especially we need to be each other's strength when we fail. We need to love and support each other in the sorrows of this life and rejoice with each other in the good times.

We need to be unified as a body in Christ to do Christ's work on this earth and in this place. We need the example of Christ's life and work, and the joy of his resurrection to live and grow in the hope that he gave us. I need you, in order that I can be the best that I can be. What can I be for you?

Amen.