

The Venerable Rosemarie Mallett

Sermon, Easter 3, 2021

Christ is risen. Come and hear the words of Scripture. Come and hear the words of life. Come and be empowered. In Jesus' name, come. In the name of the Father, and the son and the Holy Spirit.

In our gospel reading from Luke the disciples and their companions are discussing the astonishing happening to the two of their comrades as they had gone on their way to and when they reached home in Emmaus (24.36). Maybe they were also speaking of what the women had run to tell them. When suddenly Jesus comes among them.

When he had joined the despondent two on their journey to Emmaus, Jesus had interpreted the things about himself in all the Scriptures (24.27). Now, again, with this larger group now he speaks of how 'everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled'. Jesus once again breaks the word with them. He challenges them to rethink recent events; and to read the scriptures in a new light. Jesus repeats to them things he has said previously, but this time their eyes are opened to recognise Jesus and their minds are opened to understand

Scriptures. He disperses their fears, shares his peace, and offers them the nourishing food of faith.

At Emmaus and here in the room where they are gathered, Jesus is recognised as bread is blessed and broken and where food is shared. After all the drama and turmoil of the past days, revelation comes to the followers in the very ordinary activities of coming together and eating together. But this is no ordinary meal. Its purpose is to bring together, to share together and then to be sent out to share with others. The Emmaus two did that as they rush back to share the good news with the others, and all these disciples will be tasked to do the same, to proclaim the good news not just in word but in living out of a sacramental life committed to sharing of God's love and forgiveness to all nations.

In the line of witnesses to Jesus' story, the gospel has been handed on to us to pass on. The reading from 1 John set for today begins....

"See what love the Father has given us...Beloved we are God's children now..."

We are the witnesses now. We are the disciples offering peace, love and forgiveness to the world around us.

Sunday by Sunday we meet and share God's word, his peace and we are nourished by his spiritual food. 'Peace be with you' was a phrase treasured by early Christians, and we do so also and place it at the centre of our liturgy week by week, as we take time to stop and greet each other in the peace of our Lord before we come to remember his ultimate sacrifice in the prayers and actions of the Eucharist.

In contrast to the violence of the crucifixion, the risen Jesus brought peace. This peace, however, was no escape from cruelty. Jesus still bears his wounds. Thinking of the many conflicts and challenges around the world, and in our own communities or families, we know that peace is no easy option, as it means relinquishing a very human desire for power and control and being willing to compromise. As we witnessed with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it is the small gestures, such as a welcome to a companion or the sharing of a meal together, count for a lot. As did Peter's welcome and offer of forgiveness to the Jews, as we heard in our reading from Acts.

Amongst all of the real suffering and deaths, and all of the sabre rattling of large and powerful governments, with regard to COVID19 and the pandemic and the needs of all countries, especially those of Europe and the UK, to work together to situations in Burma/Myanmar, Ethiopia/Tigray and other places where conflict

reigns, even on our very own streets, we need a lot of healing in our world this week. There is an opportunity for past conflicts to be reconsidered, each party beginning to realise what it felt like from the other side, and for forgiveness to be offered and received.

But that is on the large stage, and what are we doing here in our church? Are we worrying and fearful? Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote:

Fear paralyzes, faith empowers;

Fear disheartens, faith encourages.

Fear sickens, faith heals;

Fear makes useless, faith makes serviceable.

As we face the emerging reality of life with COVID, we must not be fearful and be looking back to where we were but grow to be a variant of what we were before, focused not only on rekindling the life of the church within a building as well as online, but also a re-energised sense of mission to the world around us. This will not be easy, as it was not for the disciples over 2000 years ago. We need to be ready, empowered by the Holy spirit, to show love and healing to a very broken world. The very bread of life has been broken for us, therefore let us keep the feast and then go forth and share his love and peace. Amen.