

REFLECTIONS

It is hard for us to realise how utterly shocking and unbelievable the resurrection of Jesus was for his disciples. We are used – every year - to Good Friday being quickly followed less than 3 days later by Easter joy. Even in our services on Good Friday, we tend to include a phrase such as ‘but we know this was not the end’. But for Jesus’s friends, it seemed to be **truly** the end of everything they had known, dreamed of and cared about.

The reaction of Thomas in our gospel reading today is totally understandable. For one of the main ways in which we believe that which seems to us to be impossible or unlikely is to see it for ourselves. ‘Seeing is believing’, we say. Yet there are other ways. We may believe on the testimony of a reliable witness. Our courts rely on this method. And this is what Peter urges when he addresses a crowd six weeks later. The writer of the gospel also refers to this, explicitly saying that the gospel account has been written to give us a basis for belief. The scriptures are witness statements on which our faith may rest.

Yet there are two other reasons why we might believe something. It may fit with the way other things work; make sense in terms of context, or of other things we do know. It may ‘stand to reason’. And finally, we may believe something because we have tried it and it works. The mechanics may be a mystery, but we know that we can rely on it. I believe in both my car and my computer on this basis. I can’t tell you how or why, but they work (usually!). Our faith may rest upon belief of this kind – on the experience of trusting God and being held by Him.

Going deeper

Thomas’s declaration ‘My Lord and my God’ sums up John’s message of who Christ is, and the words of Jesus look ahead to those of us who have come to believe without actually seeing him. In many ways this passage represents the culmination of John’s gospel, and many scholars think it was where the gospel originally ended.

I wonder.....What is the basis of your belief in Jesus as Lord, and how does this affect the way you live your life?

THIS SUNDAY’S SERVICES ONLINE

Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
10am Zoom Holy Communion President: Hilary Davey
Preacher: Peter Gray

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

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| Sun 19th | Morning Psalm 30:1- 5 & Mark 15:46 to 16:8 Evening Psalm 81: 1-10 |
| Mon 20th | Morning Psalm 19 & Colossians 1:1-14 Evening Psalm 139 |
| Tue 21st | Morning Psalm 8 & Colossians 1:15 to end Evening Psalm 104 |
| Wed 22nd | Morning Psalm 30 & Colossians 2:1-15 Evening Psalm 33 |
| Thurs 23rd | Morning Psalms 5 & 146 & Ephesians 6:10-20 Evening Psalms 3 & 11 |
| Fri 24th | Morning Psalm 61 & Colossians 3:12- 41 Evening Psalm 118 |
| Sat 25th | Morning Psalm 37: 23 to end & Acts 12:25 to 13:13 Evening Psalm 45 |

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH, DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Second Sunday of Easter
19th April 2020

Collect

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Acts 2.14a, 22-32

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” ‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, “He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.” This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.’

Gospel: John 20.19-31

When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.



See St Mary’s church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.



Please ‘Like’ our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In April please pray for: **St Mary's Church of England, St Mary's C of Primary School**
The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Keith Simmonds, James Cochrane, Valerie Lester, Dennis Sheldrick, David Davies, Sylvia Banks

EVENTS

WITH APOLOGIES, PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS ALL EVENTS ARE SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

NEWS

We have received the sad news of the death of Keith Simmonds. Keith and Pat were for many years regular worshippers at the 8 o'clock service and generous supporters of St Mary's. They moved to London five years ago to be near their family. Keith, who was 92, died on 23rd March following a fall and a short illness. *Denis Tindley*

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear friends

It was lovely to be with so many of you from St Mary's and the village churches on Easter Sunday via Zoom. I also found the Maundy Thursday and online Good Friday services very moving, perhaps especially the recorded reading of George Herbert's poem 'The Sacrifice', in which the voice of Jesus asks 'was ever grief like mine?' This surely strikes a chord with those at the moment who are bereaved and unable properly to honour their dead, and with those who see their future in tatters as the weeks and months of this pandemic continue.

Then it was Easter - an Easter unlike most others we have known. Easter Sunday was Bishop Stephen's final service as Bishop of Chelmsford. Four years ago he wrote: 'I wake up in a world where Christ has risen. That means I wake up in a world where sin, corruption and death do not have the last word.' This echoes another author who writes that resurrection means that 'all that separates and injures and destroys has been overcome by all that unites and heals and creates.'

So how does this resurrection faith help in the present time? Certainly there is evidence all around us of selfless devotion that is both moving and encouraging, as is the contact we can have with each other - perhaps by phone if not online. For many, I know that faith is an incredible comfort. But this does not always make it easy to stay positive. Although I am myself quite comfortable, I feel an overwhelming sadness and anxiety almost in the air. So much is uncertain. And I know that at times of personal bereavement, even some strong believers feel as if their faith itself has deserted them when they needed it most. A sense of spiritual failure can then be added to feelings of despair.

We are, however, people of hope. I really do hope that you woke this week filled with the underlying confidence that the resurrection of Jesus can bring. For it is our belief that this **IS** the ultimate reality, whatever we are feeling right now. But if you find that certainty hard to hang on to, don't worry - you are not alone. God himself has been through the depths, understands and holds us up.

With love and prayers
Caroline Currer

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

O Jesus, no place could contain a heart such as yours; full to the brim and running over, even bursting open rock with such amazing love. How can I be fearful of what will be when love like yours will catch me up and carry me even through the grave, and beyond - to the brightest of futures.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER DURING THE PERIOD OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

We have a team of church members who are ready to help by

- * Collecting essential shopping and medical supplies
- * Providing a regular friendly chat by phone. If you are self-isolating and would like some support or, if you would like to be part of the team who can help, please contact the Parish Office by telephone or email. *Judith Hasler*

PARISH OFFICE The Parish Office is now closed to visitors but we are contactable by telephone and email as usual.

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM REMAIN CLOSED until further notice in accordance with national guidelines.

EMAIL BULLETINS We are issuing regular email bulletins that highlight information from the website, attach the Grapevine and service sheet and provide the Zoom links for live services that weekend. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssafronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

SUNDAY WORSHIP There are several ways of joining in our team worship on Sunday which can be accessed from links on St Mary's Church at Home webpage. * You can watch a pre-recorded 30 minute Act of Worship led by Revd. Alex Jeewan on youtube at any time after Friday, * You can participate in live Zoom Services led from various locations in the team. The service sheet used for these services and Grapevine are also available on the webpage. If you would like technical help in setting up Zoom, please contact Gerald Gardner gerald.gardner@ntlworld.com or Steve Hasler s.hasler@btopenworld.com before Sunday.

May's edition of **PARISH NEWS** is available on the website at <http://www.stmaryssafronwalden.org/parishnews>

JIMMY'S DONATIONS At this time we are not able to collect our regular donations from St Mary's Church, SW, or make our vegetable delivery. Instead as a church we are giving financial support directly to Jimmy's. If you feel you wish to give to Jimmy's please pop your monetary donations into the Parish Room letter box. *Tim Game*

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



MINISTRY TEAM

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