

# New Kilpatrick

Sermon

28th April 2019

John 21:1-14

***Spirit... tell us stories... that bring us into the emotion of truth... the desire for light... the longing for justice... stories that include us... finding ourselves there... where resurrection is real... So be it... Amen***

Would you rebuild Notre Dame... with the roof exactly as it was before... restored as we remember it... or would you build a new roof entirely... using modern methods... and designs and technology and materials?...

I suppose you can reframe that question as:... would you rebuild the cathedral... so it was just as it was... able to do just as it was doing... or would you evolve it... so that it might do more than it did in the past... create a space more relevant... more engaging with the present?...

Would you keep it as a faithful memorial to the past... or create something that grapples with faith into the future?...

Certainly this would not be a question stonemasons and carpenters of any time other than our own... would even consider... because when a cathedral roof burned down... there was never any question they would use the latest designs and technologies and ideas to make the new roof better, stronger, more glorious... using our best technologies to glorify God... because they saw these buildings as living stories... and you wouldn't want to keep a cathedral building in the past... but take the opportunity to make sure... it was a building that was better... higher... taller... more beautiful than anything else around it... and certainly better than it was in the past...

But there is something contrary in our contemporary culture... that replacing things with exactly what they were like in the past... as if we let go something of who we are... and lose something of our meaning... if we don't replace them...

And some will convince us this is the case... our experience of who we are... is found in such great architectural works... like the School of Art for example... replaced as it was... our own BREXIT debacle... and white house executive orders... that imagines things can

be great again if we just did things the way we did in the past... and for a society that has lost its meaning... this may feel okay...

But it is not an argument the faithful understand... We have been given a story... of a man... who died... but is not restored... Rather, resurrected... He is better than he was... he has stretched the old rules... expanded our horizons... torn up our presumptions... pushed our faith... our physics... our storytelling... our poetry... and now meets us on beaches... on Emmaus roads... in upper rooms... on the other side of the tomb...

Perhaps God could have just restored Jesus... done some magic trick... and brought the bones back to life... reanimated him... so that he could do everything he did before...

But is that way does that fulfil anything?...

This story we tell of empty tombs... is far more than restoring a body to life... There are no healing stories this side of resurrection... no parables... no sermons... no walking on water... restoring the blind... There is nothing of the previous life... There is no restoring to the past glories...

This is new... this is shifting the whole story towards what is yet unknown... nothing familiar here... no anchors to hold us in those halcyon days... Instead the future has to be grappled as unknown...

This is resurrection... not a body restored... This is everything rebooted... not even just a new software programme... but an entirely new operating system... a new understanding of the way things are... a deeper and more profound hope... a wider experience of what life means... and what we can trust... what we believe to be true...

What the stories of easter tell us... precious few though they are... which is remarkable in itself... (here's this massive event... the whole of history we've been told is heading towards... and there is hardly a word about it)... what these stories tell us perhaps is that resurrection is an experience... rather than an event... and the handful of stories we have... are there not to prove anything... but say instead... this is how it feels...

Jesus is alive among us... when you break bread... as on the beach... when you make welcome... as with the stranger at Emmaus... when you question... as in the upper room... That spirit of Jesus... that life... that love... it is found anew among us... Jesus is more alive now than ever he was... because he isn't limited to skin and bone... restored in some solitary spot... on a beach... a road... an upper room...

God hasn't just replaced Jesus... restored the saviour just as he was before... Love has brought him alive in a new way... He is more than he was... resurrected... among us... everywhere... Everything is different now...

And sometimes we don't know what to do with that... and so we limit Jesus again to a physical body... but resurrection has to be more than that... we are in unknown territory... that faces the future... not with the old rules... and expectations and worldview... but with this new way of Jesus being alive among us...

It is how we are to live as people of faith... Unfortunately we back track on that so often... we restore things... we return to the old models... we institutionalise things... fix them... immortalise them... which is the very antithesis of resurrection...

Instead we are invited to live grappling with a future unknown... Is it not the only way to be authentically faithful... to live into the future and not restore the past... because the rules are now different...

Which lead us here... and sharing communion... and in the sharing we recognise Jesus alive among us... It is a table that is not meant to be a restoration of our faith... but a resurrection of it... an invitation to live in a different way... with new rules... and new daring... where the past doesn't matter... Who we were then... is not restored... all that darkness... or hurt... or pain... but resurrected to new life...

A memorial perhaps... but far more a gift that says go and live authentically in the world... more alive than you were before... because love is not restored... love is fulfilled...

Don't go and do the same things again... go and be more... for grace is not restored... grace is now overflowing...

For this bread and wine story... this tale of faith... of beach barbecues and Emmaus roads... says the rules have changed... Jesus is not restored to us... but is more alive now than ever before... more alive in us... in this community... in this meal... in this sharing... than he could be if he was only reanimated...

So come together... Now Jesus is everywhere among us... The old limits are gone... this resurrection meal... shares new life... offers future... and reveals the love that renews everything...