

New Kilpatrick

Podcast

19th April 2020

John 20:19-31

Welcome

Hello and welcome to this weeks podcast. In the echo of Easter and a continuing lockdown we take ourselves back to the original lockdown of the disciples in the upper room, too frightened to leave because of persecution. Except one person had left, Thomas, who knows where he went or why. Maybe he was looking for eggs or flour or pasta, but he missed the vision of Jesus among them again. And a whole story has built up around that incident, thankfully, because for us today, in our lockdown, this original lockdown story offers us a hope and an encouragement to hold us through this, so let's explore together.

If you have been creating your worship space, please continue do so again, adding perhaps today a set of keys representing that locked room in which the disciples had isolated themselves.

Introduction

Holy Jesus,
fresh to the world
in resurrection skin;

now such resurrection
is Thomas' rubicon,
his moment to cross,
to chose to believe:
lost relationships can be restored;

that which was truly broken,
is now brought back together again;
that which left such a cavern,
is now filled with love again;
that which had flooded with darkness and fear,
now floods with light and hope again;

in this place of restoration
we meet you,



with our doubting saint,
who found resurrection
was not so much a proof of life restored,
but a relationship renewed;
and in such a truth
let us gather.

Reading

Psalms 118:19-24

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.



Prayer

Loving God
Thomas is the saint
who has today come of age
for our age

the disciple
who speaks for us
into our anxieties
and confusion today

O Risen Jesus
we want to reach out
touch
know

believe
this time
can come good
and we can be restored
resurrected
back into relationship

so may we pray today
honestly
shaping our time
with the questions that are shaping us

may we pray today
truthfully
placing here
the conundrums of our faith

may we pray today
trustingly
daring to believe
what our souls see but our eyes do not yet

And in such a place
where our honesty
humbles us,
our questions
humanise us,
and our fears
shape us,

make this a resurrection place
a renewal place
where
coming as we are,
honestly,
we meet you
not with our theology
but with our needs

and in such a place
once more
know the love
that finds us
where we are
as we are



Hear us as we say the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy name;
thy kingdom come;
they will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever.
Amen



A Retelling

Thomas wondered why he was the one who was being whispered about? They all thought he couldn't hear, but he could. Perfectly. But he only needed to look at their faces which gave away as much as their whispers. He heard the word 'Doubter' and that said in mocking tones. "He's just jealous" and with shallow sympathy "Och, you understand since he wasn't here when Jesus appeared to us."

But how little they knew him. Thomas wasn't jealous. Thomas was worried. He was worried he was losing something, something that was so profound to him, so essential about his world now, he was scared the foundations had been taken away and it was all going to collapse.

Then Thomas laughed to himself, remembering, "Was it not Peter and John who had to run to the tomb because they doubted the words of Mary? That was doubt needing proof, but they aren't being whispered about."

And was it not him, Thomas who tied his colours to Jesus when he chose to return to Bethany with him to be with Mary and Martha on hearing they had lost Lazarus?

Again he laughed with frustration because the others tried to persuade Jesus not to go. They hummed and hawed, scared more for their own lives than for Jesus, but he was the one who said, "Let us go and die with him", not the bold Peter known as the Rock, not the Zealot who said he was prepared to die for the cause, not the Sons of Thunder, but him who was now being whispered about as The Doubter.

Thomas was not the doubter. Thomas was the one who almost understood more than the others, which made this moment hard for him because the one who was willing to die with Jesus, wasn't there when Jesus returned. And that hurt Thomas.

They didn't understand this questioning was deep down grief, not doubt. This wasn't about belief, questioning faith. This was about trust. So Thomas was quiet for the rest of the week and the other disciples left him alone.

The whispers became less, but he knew what they were thinking. He wanted to see the holes where the nails had been, not to prove some fact but to trust again, to know this relationship with Jesus had been real and could go on.

And just at that moment of crisis, when he thought he was going to let go, it happened again. This time, for him. The Ghost of God appeared once more.

And the vision drew everyone's breath. But Jesus almost ignored the others. The greeting was Thomas' greeting, the words were Thomas' words.

And Thomas knew, if he wanted, he could put his fingers in the holes from the nails, but he didn't need to. It was no longer necessary. The relationship was still possible. He was right to have followed, to commit to Jesus right to the end. He felt the strength in his soul, the peace in his spirit and the truth in his heart.

Death does not cut you off. Resurrection is a relationship and his relationship with Jesus was restored.

Song

I am his child - Moses Hogen

Reflection

Thank goodness for Thomas. I almost breathe a sign of relief his resurrection experience is there in the pages of the Bible and quite a testament to the congregation for whom John was writing his Gospel. Out of many resurrection stories around, they chose this one to strengthen and encourage them in their context of isolation.

But we know Thomas as the patron saint of doubters. But really? Tell his story with a little imagination and you find a person far from being a doubter.

This is the disciple who committed to follow Jesus back to Bethany and Lazarus' sisters when the authorities were threatening all their lives. The other disciples did everything to prevent Jesus going. Thomas was the one who said, "Let us go and die with him if we must."

Not the words of a doubter.

So when he missed Jesus return he must have sunk so low. The one who said I'll die with you missed the one he'd die for.

But this is a resurrection story. So might we hear Thomas words before Jesus appears simply as words of loss. Might they not have been a natural reaction to a fear that everything he had become familiar with, and liked and felt good about, had just had their future destroyed?

But when Jesus appears again, despite what he says about touching the wounds, Thomas doesn't. He doesn't need to. Now that it was possible, it wasn't necessary. He discovered his relationship with Jesus was still as strong this side of crucifixion.

And as we faithful folk find our way through this unfamiliar world, Thomas perhaps comes into his own, because surely we find in him the truth: resurrection is a relationship restored, therefore a relationship with the future .

Tombs, darkness, Covid-19 does not break that relationship, with each other, with God, or tomorrow. That's the experience of Thomas, and why the Gospel of John's isolated church found this story so important to them: this is about a relationship restored and a future possible, despite experiencing something we'd imagine would break the future forever. And as this story encouraged followers in past times, may it also encourage us today. Resurrection is a relationship, a relationship with the future.

Prayer

Loving God
alive in the world
may we find you
among us
now
here
in all we experience

And when our senses don't make sense of
what is happening
and we are worried
and we have concerns
and we live looking only to the near future
may we find you among us
in a faith that dares to look further

So as we bring into this gathered community
those who are grieving and hurting
those who are leading and worrying
those who are managing and those who are not
may we find you among us
in compassion and strength



For among us here
we place those who are ill
families grieving
those unable to see their loved ones
those who are isolating and avoiding
who worry day to day
those at risk of abuse
of being uncared for
may we find you among us
in a love that holds us all

Among us are
we place those who are leading us
who are managing this pandemic
from government leaders and their huge
responsibility
to medics and hospital workers and their risk taking and tireless care
from community workers to shop keepers
carers and posties
and all who are working to keep us going
may we find you among us
in the compassion of those who support and care for us

Among us
are our own families and neighbours
those we know at risk and those we cannot visit
but they are here
they are named here
in our words and prayers and concerns
named in love
for we love them
may we find you among us
in that love, greater than all things

May we come to trust
a resurrection story
that dares us believe
that out of crisis comes life again
the relationship with love
is too strong to break
and we will come to see
beyond the short term
and believe towards the future

So be it
Amen



Song

Be thou my vision - Wallingford Parish Church Choir

Epilogue

Despite how we have approached the story of Thomas today, Thomas will be known as The Doubter but here's a wee epilogue that finds belief in not believing...

I do not believe...

...love comes to an end when an ending comes;

I do not believe...

...hope is useless when we feel useless;

I do not believe...

...peace is out of touch when we cannot touch others;

I do not believe...

...belief is all about certainty and not filled with doubts;

I do not believe...

...stories are only stories rather a way of experiencing truth;

I do not believe...

...questions are wrong but are invitations into an adventure;

I do not believe...

...resurrection is a belief, but a relationship;

And I do not believe...

...that relationship is only for those that believe.

Benediction

Go in peace my friends
Go in the truth
of resurrection
our relationship with the future
does not come to an end
that which shaped us then
will shape us anew



and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
the Love of God
and the Commonwealth of the Spirit
be with us all

Announcements

Thank you for letting us join you today. Thanks to Paul Cooke who read and the music was Moses Hogen's 'I am your child; sung by St Peters Chorale' and 'Be thou my vision' sung by Wallingford Parish Church Choir.

We meet again next time hopefully but also offer a songs of praise on Zoom on Sunday 26th at 6.30pm. Who knows how that will be like but it will be joyous chaos. Church is not closed, we're just online and there is something happening every day of the week so go to nkchurch.org.uk for all the details or subscribe to the Monday email and Friday bulletin which is also online.

Take care my friends. It is good to travel together. Thanks for the invitation to join you.

Keep well



New Kilpatrick Parish Church
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Faith