

Reflection 26 April 2020

Hello everyone

I'm sure we will look back on this time of social distancing and lock down with many different memories. But perhaps you like me will remember just how creative we all got when it came to communicating with our family and friends. I'm not just talking about the discovery of Zoom or our increased knowledge of what Facebook, You tube and Whats app can be used for. I had no idea that the national theatre had a you tube channel until they very thoughtfully e-mailed and told me that over the coming weeks a number of their recorded performances were available free online.

What I'm really thinking about is the simple pleasure of exchanging photographs; quick snaps taken throughout your day of what you are doing and sent via various messaging services to your friends and families. A way of sharing serious and not so serious things with those we would love to see face to face.

Why do we do it? Maybe it's all about reassurance and reminders that even in these odd times our lives still go on. We still bake cakes that don't rise or forget where the tin opener is or eat far too many Easter eggs because you bought 10 for the online church Easter egg hunt and then realised that Norma and I would have to eat all the eggs ourselves. I'd like to report that we have enough chocolate in those dozen eggs to last us until next Easter, but then as a minister, I will just have to let you guess how long it will last us.

Reassurance and reminders are important in life. We like to hear again and again the important things of life and the original disciples were no different.

One of the questions that those of a tidy administrative type of mind struggle with in today's reading is a simple one. Why does Jesus feel he needs to appear to his disciples three times to get his message across?

Well yes we certainly understand Jesus has a real presence, maybe

What else does Jesus need to tell us before he leaves to be with God the Father?

In today's reading Jesus interrupts another ordinary day in the lives of the disciples. Stripped of much of the theological discussion that has accrued to this passage over the years, what we see here is John showing us just how Jesus is going to work with his followers down through the centuries. He's going to turn

up time and again, often when you weren't expecting him and through his presence he will offer support and comfort.

Remember at the start of this reading we discover that Peter has gone back to Galilee to pick up the threads of his old life.

He's gone fishing,

I'm going fishing Peter says.

We'll come too, the other six disciples exclaim.

So, into the boat they go

And they catch

Absolutely nothing.

It's almost as if their old life is rejecting them, isn't it?

The disciples are in need and

Then a voice from the shore asks them a question.

It's Jesus

Boys, he says all father like.

Now;

in the Bible,

questions between fathers and sons have a habit of being more than just questions.

They always seem to have a purpose.

Remember Adam in the garden of Eden

God comes looking for him just after he had eaten the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God calls to Adam, 'where are you?'

Adam is hiding in the bushes. He is ashamed of death.

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Cain, where is your brother Abel? Is another seemingly simple question; except Cain is guilty of his brother's death.

What about Mary in another garden by the tomb. Mary, 'why are you crying,' says Jesus.

Overcome by grief she has been looking for the living among the dead.

These all turn out not just to be questions from a father to his children. These are questions aimed at freeing Adam, Cain and Mary from shame, guilt and sorrow.

So, what about the question from the shore that day. Is that designed to help the disciples?

Children, have you caught any fish?

NO! is the almost rude reply.

The nets are empty and they will remain empty

And for these fishermen empty nets.

Mean nothing to eat.

Are these empty nets a confession that something is missing from their lives?

They have nothing and Jesus says

Throw your nets over the right side of the boat

Over God's side.

So, they throw their nets as directed. And find the nets so full they can hardly pull them in.

Then the disciple who Jesus loved, let's call him John, realises that the figure on the shore is Jesus.

It is the Lord, he cries out.

A creedal statement we would say.

It is the Lord- the basis of our faith.

Jesus is Lord.

What does Peter do?

Like Adam in the garden, Peter puts his clothes on, but he doesn't hide in the bushes, he jumps into the water to get to the shore.

The fish are brought ashore – all 153 of them.

But there is another surprise waiting for the disciples.

When they land, they find Jesus beside a charcoal barbecue with fish already cooking on it and Jesus holding a plate of bread.

Food waiting to feed the disciples. A need satisfied by the risen Jesus.

Things have become practical with Jesus.

A person does not live by his own bread alone, it seems, he or she adds it to what God has given.

Soon these seven fishers of men will swarm like fishers of men out over the seas of the world, taking the story of God's only son to the end of the earth.

But first

'Come on, Jesus says let's have some breakfast.'

The day that had dawned so dimly for the disciples with empty nets now turns into a celebration.

Jesus wants to celebrate his resurrection and theirs too it seems.

No going back now, your life has changed too, he says.

Yes, John has written one more reassuring story of Jesus with his disciples, but this time it is not about convincing them he is real or breathing the Holy Spirit on to them or blessing them with his special peace. This time it is reassurance that Jesus himself will continue with them.

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Jesus has no need of zoom or whats app or even frequent photographs to reassure us. Like the disciples, we rest in the promise of his presence, the promise of the gifts of the spirit and the promise of his special peace that he showers down on us whenever we need.

Who is that figure on the shore?

It is the Lord.

Praise God, he will feed and comfort us.

Amen.