

Sunday 17th May EASTER 6

Read John 14.15-21

Reflection

Revd Claire Kiddy (Curate)

Living through times of change has always proved challenging for humankind. Uncertainty can make people fearful because it forces us to face up to the truth that are not in control of our own life. The disciples faced great uncertainty, their everyday life had been turned upside down by Jesus. Often the disciples appear to be baffled and perplexed yet clearly they found Jesus utterly compelling and doggedly follow, though they didn't know the way they were going.

Then Jesus drops the bombshell and tells them he is going away and they cannot go with him. Recognising their fear of being left behind Jesus reassures them, 'do not let your hearts be troubled'. Of course the disciples do not want to be left alone and understandably they are confused by Jesus' explanation, where does it leave them, what are they to do? 'If you love me keep my commandments' says Jesus, 'and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever'.

John 14 is a wonderfully reassuring passage, particularly now when our hearts are troubled. We were just beginning to accept that lockdown was the safest option during the pandemic and now with the easing of restrictions society is faced with confusion and fear. Fortunately, as Christians we know we have Christ's Spirit as our Advocate, helper and guide.

This week as we observe the Ascension of our Lord the nine days of prayer to Pentecost let us be thankful for the gift of the Holy Spirit. I invite you to ponder on what it means for you to know that the Divine dwells in you. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables us to abide in God's love - abiding in the sense of resting but also in living or staying in God's love.

Being unable to gather for worship on Sunday is painful, but from what I have heard, as a church family we have become more aware of the power of prayer connecting us. This challenging time has highlighted for us our utter dependence on God and amidst the uncertainty we have strived to keep Jesus' commandments.

To begin with I found it difficult to know how to live out Jesus' commandments of loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbour with staying at home. I felt guilty at having the privilege of staying safe at home. I have more time to enjoy the beauty of God in Creation and abiding in the silence and solitude of prayer and reflection. It is a difficult concept to grasp that staying away from people can protect them from harm, whilst knowing that so many people need help. I was too preoccupied with my own ideas of offering practical help to recognise Jesus saying, 'stay with me and rest awhile'. I had to accept I was not needed on the front line, I was to live out my calling of serving Beccles Parish from home.

Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit I have found the 'and' has solved the dichotomy for me. You see the 'and' which connects the two commandments are the prayers that are connecting us. Through prayer we are all actively participating in building up the body of Christ. God has not changed his plans for us, he continues to use the gifts he has given us to join in building his Kingdom.

During this pandemic we have seen the power of the Holy Spirit through people's countless acts of mercy, courage, and selfless giving. Not everyone recognises this as the work of the Holy Spirit, in themselves or others. But the gratitude that society has felt has led to a renewed yearning to discover the source of all love. God's power of love is revealed in all that is good as it seeks to overcome the evil of the pandemic. The Holy Spirit enables people to recognise where God is at work for those who have eyes to see. Faith is not easy to explain, but the works of faith has the power to reveal the Spirit of Truth to those who are searching. It is our task as the body of Christ, the church, to welcome the seekers and enable them to find God, the source of love for whom they are looking. We need to discern prayerfully how we can help people discover that God has delivered us from the power of darkness and that his continual presence with us leads to eternal joy. May God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit give us strength to be carriers of His light and love.