

Sunday 19th April EASTER 2

Read John 20.19-31

Reflection

Revd Claire Kiddy (Curate)

'Peace be with you'

Oh, how we long to be in church, in our familiar surroundings and hear those words again and to have the opportunity to reach out and touch one another as we offer a sign of peace. But for a season we must be content to worship from our own homes. We can be encouraged in the knowledge that although we are a dispersed community we are also gathered together in one body, the body of Christ.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for the first disciples suddenly seeing Jesus stood amongst them and saying 'peace be with you'. At the moment we are all parted from someone we hold very dear, we can feel very lonely and isolated so it is not hard to imagine our joy and surprise if they walked into the room right now. Well the disciples must have felt like that but multiplied many, many times and mixed into their emotion must have been a mixture of fear and disbelief. It would have been an indescribable experience. No wonder Thomas was put out when he found out he had missed this epiphany. He stubbornly refuses to believe the disciples unless he has proof. He wants to experience first hand the risen Christ, he wants to see him and to touch him.

Are you missing the sensation of touch? Do you feel like you are experiencing things second hand, from a distance, disconnected from the reality of life. If only we could see our loved ones and reach out and touch them we would believe all was well. We have seen in the daily corona virus updates that the scientific evidence shows that the best way to fight the virus is to stay in , protect the NHS and save lives and we can do nothing else than believe this to be true.

All over the country our health care workers have seen the evidence and yet have continued to reach out to touch the sick, to tend the wounds of those with the virus and to protect and care for vulnerable patients and residents in care homes. They are putting themselves in the front line and selflessly coming face to face with the devastating effects of this virus. We may not have first hand experience of looking after these patients but we can look with admiration and gratitude with those who do and applaud them. These people are touching the wounds of Christ and we must pray for them. Jesus bears the scars of suffering, he has first hand experience of suffering and it is his wounds which will bring healing and transformation.

Perhaps Thomas speaks for all of us at home. It is not easy being in isolation, our natural instinct is to go out and see what we can do to help. Stuck at home we can imagine life is still going on as normal, it would be much easier if we could see for ourselves the deserted streets and locked up businesses. It is just not easy to believe unless we see with our own eyes.

Mercifully faith is a gift. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. Hear those words of Jesus to you, 'peace be with you'. Through his resurrection Jesus breathes new life into us, we are being called afresh to new life in a way that is a new experience for us all. He is calling us into a deeper faith, where we will know his presence and peace more fully. The phrase 'less is more' comes to mind - less of our own agenda and more of an awareness of God's presence with us. Emmanuel, God with us. God is with us in this pandemic, He will be our guide and will bring about transformation.

Whether you are in isolation or a key worker the words of this hymn are most appropriate: Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee, take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of your love; take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.