

Luke 24.36-48; Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7.
8:00 & 10:00 p.m. at St. Andrew's, Totteridge
19th April 2015

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart always be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer (Ps.19:14).

I just want to focus on four words from our gospel reading today, 'Peace be with you.' Four simple words, but, as I so often find, especially in the small hours of the morning when I'd rather be asleep, and no amount of counting imaginary sheep jumping over imaginary gates seems to work, a terribly difficult idea to embrace. My 'little monkey mind' can start swinging through the darkest parts of the forest of the sub-conscious, and no matter how much I might try to be still, or to pray, or to meditate, my 'little monkey mind' just flits from concern to concern, and sometimes lapses into anxiety or even anguish.

I wish I could always hang on to a phrase composed by that very excellent writer Simone Weil,

'In struggling against anguish one never produces serenity; the struggle against anguish only produces new forms of anguish.'

Why is it so hard to find peace sometimes? Is it because, as human beings in a secular world, where a self-styled 'autonomy' is so often the order of the day, we just find it terribly difficult to really believe that the Creator's love, devoted to all the children of God, 'has glorified his servant Jesus' by raising him from the dead. And assuming that I can

accept that this is true, am I, I wonder, just too narrow-minded to fully realize the total implications of what this means?

Because if it is true that God has shown us all we need to know, then Jesus is quite right to ask, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?'

In a quite lovely poem called 'And that will be heaven,' the writer Evangeline Paterson contemplates the eternity that awaits us,

And that will be heaven

and that will be heaven
at last the first unclouded
seeing

to stand like the sunflower
turned full face to the sun drenched
with light in the still centre
held while the circling planets
hum with an utter joy

seeing and knowing
at last in every particle
seen and known and not turning
away

never turning away
again

The poet imagines heaven as the place where the occupants, like the Sunflower, are always dedicated to tracking the source of divine radiation. Throughout my life, I've found that I sometimes struggle to hold on to that vision, that even though Jesus brought it down to earth for me, I still cannot always hold it with me permanently, to always retain the deep peace that must come with that heavenly state.

And then I remember those words from the cross, 'Father, why have you forsaken me?' and I think of the anguish Jesus must have felt, and I remember that whilst I may be called to be a priest, I am not called to be Jesus, and neither are you. Our God has been here for all of us already, is here now, whether we acknowledge him or not; but he wants us to live life to the full in the here and now, and the only way we can fully do that is to trust, thru' the power of the H.S., in our growing relationship with him.

God has defeated even death, thrown down the gates of hell, and left us with work to do that takes us out of ourselves. Repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be proclaimed in all the world, that the kingdom of heaven may draw near. We may not enter that happy state just yet, but we can all do our part to bring it a little nearer, to share in the hope that is set before us, the hope that brings peace to people's hearts as well as to our own. 'Peace be with you.'

Spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Luke 24.36-48 Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?' ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence. ⁴⁴Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.

Acts 3.12-19

¹²When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

1 John 3.1-7

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¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

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