



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

EASTER WEEK

13-18 APRIL 2020

INTRODUCTION

For Easter Week we have daily Bible passages describing events in the hours following Jesus' resurrection and then some of his appearances to his disciples, with Thoughts for each day from the Ministry Team.

MONDAY - The Women's Report (Luke 24:9-12)

The women from Galilee who had gone to the tomb early on Easter morning had found it empty and had been told by two men in white that Jesus had risen,⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Thought for the day

The male disciples considered the women's report 'an idle tale' (or in other translations, rather more bluntly, 'nonsense'). And in so dismissing it they missed the earliest opportunity to share the mixed emotions that the women had experienced at the tomb. This privilege was the women's and remained theirs, so that all the Gospel accounts gave them their rightful place on the first day of the new epoch heralded by Jesus' resurrection. Only Peter then had second thoughts and went to the tomb to see for himself.

In human society is there not a terrible tendency to dismiss the testimony of the powerless (often women) when it conflicts with that of the powerful (often men)? Do we not see great injustice as a result? And in our own lives do we have an instinctive filtering mechanism which leads us to believe or disbelieve a message according to the perceived status of the messenger? Is that right?

TUESDAY - The Soldiers (Matthew 28:11-15)

After the burial of Jesus' body the high priests had put a guard on the tomb to ensure it was not tampered with. But the earthquake and the angel left the soldiers shaking and like dead men. When the women had left the tomb,¹¹ some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened.¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers,¹³ telling them, 'You must say, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep."¹⁴ If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.'¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Thought for the day

In Matthew's account, the chief priests continued to conspire against Jesus and his disciples, even after Jesus was dead and buried. Ironically their action in placing a guard over the tomb made it impossible for anyone truthfully to claim that human beings had tampered with the body. They must have been taken aback by the guard's report of earthquake, angel and women. So they bribed the guards to join their improvised cover-up, an early example of fake news. It seems so difficult for many people, especially those in the public eye to acknowledge their mistakes. And yet we all of us make mistakes, collectively and individually; given that, surely the most important thing is whether we deny them to ourselves and others, making something bad even worse; or admit them, correct them as best we can, and avoid them in the future.

WEDNESDAY - Jesus appears to his Disciples (Luke 24:36-48)

Easter Day evening found the disciples discussing what had happened during the day. ³⁶ While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?' ³⁹ Look 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.' ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴ Then 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.' ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Thought for the day

In spite of the women's testimony, Peter's confirmation of the empty tomb, and the recent report of the two companions on the road to Emmaus, the eleven were still perplexed and hardly knew what to expect next. They certainly didn't expect Jesus to be there with them. Understandably they were scared and Jesus had to convince them he was not a ghost. Then, as on the road to Emmaus, he started explaining what had happened by reading and interpreting the Hebrew scriptures to them.

Perhaps you are sometimes conscious of Jesus arriving in your life or standing at your side unbidden. Or perhaps reading the Bible brings him vividly to mind or heart. When this happens, don't let him go. Try and find out what his message is for you. At a time like this it may be as simple and reassuring as 'Peace be with you'.

THURSDAY - Beside the Lake (John 21:1-14)

¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶ He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Thought for the day

This incident contains echoes of the stilling of the storm when the disciples, including the experienced fishermen, turn to Jesus, a landsman, to save them (Mark 4:35-41). Now, after their extraordinary experiences in the days after Jesus' resurrection, Peter and the others try to bring some normality back into their lives by doing what they do best - fishing. But how badly it goes - not a single fish caught. Then Jesus, standing on the shore, gives the word, and their nets are full to overflowing.

In the same way Jesus stands on the shore watching over us as we go about our ordinary lives, even in the midst of this current crisis when everything is extraordinary. From his sharing of human experience, even to the extent of dying the cruel death of the cross, to his access to the power and glory of God, he has only blessings for us, born out of his boundless love.

FRIDAY - Peter restored (John 21:15-19)

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Thought for the day

This passage continues from where yesterday's left off. But the emphasis changes. Peter has begun to exercise his leadership of the disciples. But he and Jesus both know that, in one respect, he is the least worthy of all. His repeated denial of Jesus after his arrest has to be put right. Jesus might have asked Peter if he is sorry or if he wants to make public confession of his weakness. But he doesn't. Instead he asks another question - about love and the consequences of love. And Peter, as Jesus repeats the question a third time, matching the three denials, is forced to recognise the extent of his failure and the depth of Jesus' compassion for him - 'You know everything'. Jesus accepts Peter as he is and gives him his commission - 'Feed my sheep'. The cross is a staggering symbol of Jesus' love for all God's people. But in today's passage the measure of this love is shown to us as individuals. Every single one of us, no less than Peter, has access to this love - love that

accepts us for who we are, love that sees not our faults but our potential, love that comforts, heals and restores.

SATURDAY - Paul passes on the Good News of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-5&20-22)

[Part of Paul's summary of what he had heard about the resurrection of Jesus and its implications, some years before the Gospels were written down.]

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas [=Peter], then to the twelve.

²⁰ Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

Thought for the day

As we come to the end of Easter Week, we have a chance to read and reflect on one of the earliest written accounts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (v3-5). Isn't it brief? There's nothing there about Jesus' birth, or his teaching, healing or miracles, or about his passion. But even for a new church with mainly non-Jewish converts, Paul is anxious to emphasise the continuity of God's plan 'in accordance with the Scriptures'. For Paul himself this brief statement was all that was necessary, coupled as it was with his personal relationship with Jesus. And it's enough for him to use as a starting point for his explanation of all that the resurrection of Jesus means. Humanity mired in sin and death ('as all die in Adam') is transformed into humanity 'alive in Christ'. In the midst of this crisis would it not be a wonderful thing if every Christian reflected being alive in Christ? What would that look like for you, for me, for us, for the world?

JRE / 7.4.20