

Easter 3, Sunday 26th April 2020, Revd. Gemma Donnell

I was not ready for Easter this year. I do not mean eggs or chicks, or even sermons and celebrations. I also don't mean I wasn't waiting for the resurrection. I mean that I identified with Holy Saturday in a completely new way this year. The pause. The waiting. The in-between. It spoke to me in a way it never has before. I think perhaps I'm still there in some ways wait for something to change in our locked down society. But I should not stay in the tomb.

The disciples on the Emmaus road were in a similar state to me, I think. The way things are in our country at the moment speaks to their situation. I appreciate Cleophas and his friend more than I have ever done/ they're on their way to Emmaus this is a 7-mile journey. They're doing it on the resurrection day itself. They had hoped Jesus was the one to rescue them. The one who was going change their unbearable situation. Release them from their oppression. But he hadn't. more than that some of the other followers were saying he was alive... But they had no proof. No one had seen him or encountered him other than hysterical women. An empty tomb doesn't mean no death it just means a loss without a body to mourn... so on they go trudging their way to Emmaus.

Having a stranger come alongside them and talk to them not knowing what was going on must be the most annoying thing. Someone who isn't following the program! Someone who doesn't play by the rules... who isn't feel the weight of loss and pain that they are. But even more so... someone who knows better. Yet... there is something compelling about him.

There is no reason given in the bible about why these two men don't recognise their master. We know he looked different as Mary didn't recognise him in the garden that same day, but she did know him much more quickly. Perhaps these two disciples were still in the tomb. Still in their minds confined by the oppressive reality they were facing. When they come to Emmaus, they ask him to stay with them because even in the tomb they recognise something that they need in this stranger.

How do imagine Jesus? What is the most 'jesusy' thing he could be doing? If you imagine him is, he fishing? Preaching? Turning over tables in the temple. Perhaps he is healing or washing people's feet. Or even hanging on a cross. Perhaps the most characteristically 'Jesus' thing Jesus does is eat. Sharing food with people, inviting himself into their homes... it's something he does so often. In this passage it's the sharing of bread that makes Cleopas and his friend realise who they are speaking to. It's the action of breaking and sharing bread that opens their eyes with that realisation Jesus disappears from their midst. The two men returned to Jerusalem that night. Because they were no longer confined by an empty tomb but inspired by one. They could leave their pain behind because whilst their situation hadn't changed it was

completely different in the light of the resurrected Christ. Jesus didn't free them from their oppression, but he changed the world and them with it.

I don't want to stay in the tomb. I don't want to focus on the situation without realising what the resurrection has done to change it. If I met Christ on my own Emmaus journey today, I have no doubt that he would point me towards community towards shared words, shared prayers, and broken bread. We are an Easter people. Now more than ever we need to focus on what God can do in our lives no matter our circumstances. Taking each day as a gift to be celebrated. How today can you share the joy of Easter with the world? Can you clap for those who should be celebrated? Can you call on someone you think may feel lonely? Can you simply remember that God knows all emotions including isolation and pain because he was incarnate in Christ... remember that you can bring your concerns before God? Can you sing a song of joy in a new land?

Can we come out of the tomb and face the Easter reality? Things now are for some of us hard and scary and difficult. But God is there, and we can choose to look for him not in the tomb but in the world around us.

Amen.