



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

12-17 APRIL 2021

INTRODUCTION

From now on our readings are again those from the New Testament set for Morning Prayer. This week we see how John brought his Gospel to an end following the resurrection of Jesus. The Thoughts are based mainly on the text in bold type.

MONDAY - John 20:1-10

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ **Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;** ⁹ **for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.** ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Thought for the day

In John's account of Easter morning, it is Mary Magdalene who plays the most prominent role, starting here as the first to discover the empty tomb (v1) and then as messenger to Peter and John (v2). They want to see for themselves, and race to the tomb. John wins the race, but Peter pushes past him right into the tomb, and then sees, but does not understand (v6-7). John sees and believes (v8), but doesn't fully understand (v9). Because the whole idea of God raising Jesus back to life is familiar to us, indeed is the central tenet of Christian faith, we may be surprised how slow Peter and John were to realise what had happened. And yet, in our own lives, don't we often misunderstand things or only gradually recognise truth? It turns out we're in good company. But note that when the men went home (v10), Mary didn't ...

TUESDAY - John 20:11-18

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ **Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'** ¹⁸ **Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.**

Thought for the day

Mary didn't go home - she couldn't because she sensed, even in her grief, that the tomb was the place to be. And so it was to her that the angels appeared, not to the male disciples. It was to her that Jesus showed himself first, not to them. Jesus chose her, not only to see him, but to disclose the whole truth about himself to the other disciples (v17). She became his messenger (in this sense, his angel) to the others (v18) - and she a woman whose testimony would normally not be trusted. But just as she trusted her instinct to stay at the tomb, so Jesus trusted her. And the whole tone of Jesus' remarks to Mary speak of his care, compassion and love for her. If we, like Mary, recognise Jesus as Lord, he surely will offer us the same care, compassion and love.

WEDNESDAY - John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ **Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'** ²² **When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'**

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' ²⁸ Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Thought for the day

In spite of the empty tomb and Mary's message to them, the disciples were still afraid (v19). But then Jesus appeared in person, bringing peace and joy (v19-20). When this passage is read in church, the focus of attention is often on the familiar account of Thomas' transformation from doubter to believer (v24-29). While there is much to reflect on in that story, Jesus' comments and actions in his first reappearance (v21-23) are striking. First he shares his own commission with the disciples (compare Matthew 28:16-20}; secondly he gave them the Holy Spirit, pre-empting Luke's account of Pentecost (see Luke 24:49); thirdly he confers on them the power to forgive sins (reminding us of his words to Peter in Matthew 16:19). Thus, in these very few words, Jesus sets out what the disciples, and subsequently the churches, are to do. All Christians are the inheritors of this tradition.

THURSDAY - 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.'** ⁷ **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 fishermen, with all their knowledge of water and wind, 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 (v3). 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 (v6).

In the same way Jesus stands close by, watching over us as we go about our ordinary lives, even as the pandemic continues to constrain our behaviour. 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 - 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

Peter has begun to exercise his leadership of the disciples (v7,11). 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 (v15). 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' (v17). 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 - John 21:20-25

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' ²¹ **When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' ²³** So the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Thought for the day

Even as we reach the end of the Gospel, Peter still doesn't seem to have his priorities straight. After his reinstatement he is keen to discover how Jesus intends to treat John, the beloved disciple. In simple terms Jesus tells Peter two things - 'Mind your own business' - and 'Follow me' (v22).

Peter might have claimed that he had already been following Jesus for years. But Jesus in those two words of command gives them a whole new dimension - he is to be followed through death, and in the new world which his rising to life has opened up.

Above everything else, we too are called to follow Jesus, knowing that we do so in the footsteps of the saints throughout history.

JRE / 16.3.21