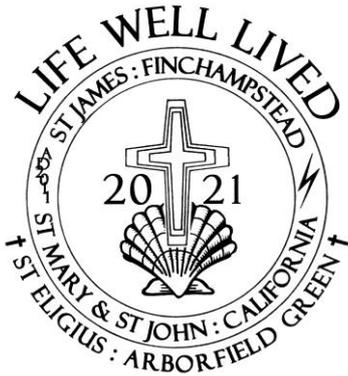


Parish of Finchampstead and California



THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

TALK 4: TRANSFORMATION THEN, TRANSFORMATION NOW

Why does the resurrection matter?

- With the crucifixion, the resurrection is the entire basis on which the Gospel was first proclaimed (eg Acts 2:24,32); emphasis on both in Paul; and both underlie all the NT writings.
- Without resurrection, Jesus simply a wise teacher, a deluded charismatic healer, a good man, who spoke to the people of his time about living a more Godly life – but in no way a witness to or exemplar of God's power.
- So for Christians everything is at stake – no other basis for our faith.
- *If Christ has not been raised from the dead, your faith is futile ... we are more to be pitied than all men* (1 Corinthians 15:17a,19b).
- *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead ...* (15:20) so the power of sin and death is defeated.
- What is the relationship between cross and resurrection?
 - Distinct, distinctive and complementary
 - Cross rooted in the earth, in its own time, in science and history
 - Resurrection comes from Heaven, points towards God's time, is understood in faith and future promise
 - Extract from *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Moltmann):
- *The resurrection is an event that happened to the Christ who died on the cross. The cross and the resurrection are mutually related, and they have to be interpreted in such a way that the one event appears in the light of the other. The cross of Christ is the cross of the Lord who was raised by God and exalted to God. It is only in this correlation that the cross acquires its special saving meaning. The raising by God was experienced by the Christ who 'was crucified, dead and buried'. It is only in this interrelation that the raising acquires its special saving meaning.*
- Look at Durer engraving – the distinction of the two ages (see below).
- New age, new creation has begun – followers of Jesus can now grasp their human and God-breathed potential to the full
- Resurrection transforms, then and now
 - Jesus' followers from scared disciples → fearless witnesses
 - Frame of reference from God/Israel → Jesus Christ/church
 - History → present fulfilment → future promise
 - Our bodies from earth-bound → heaven-bound
 - Holy Spirit from occasional → permanent
 - Everything that matters

- Return to this in concluding section but first look at what resurrection tells us about God, Jesus and the Church.

What does the Resurrection tell us about God?

- Redefines our understanding of God: compare Psalm 89:5-8,14-18 with 2 Corinthians 1:3-5;5:17-19, 1 Peter 1:3-5. God is still God but the emphasis is transformed.
- eg OT God at a distance prevented Abraham killing his son Isaac. The NT God allowed his own son to be God-forsaken in his death (Mark 15:34).
- We discover the priority of love in God's relationship with us (Romans 8:32; John 3:16). For this love God shared human suffering on the cross. Even more he associated himself with the most shameful and despicable way of dying (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- We know this because of the resurrection. Resurrection is the act that ties God inextricably to Jesus. He confirms Jesus as his revelation. He assumes Jesus' characteristics. Jesus is a parable of God.
- Through the resurrection God guarantees new life to those whose believe in him through Jesus (cf Romans 8:11).
- Resurrection evidences a God who has a plan. In the plan Jesus brings in the final age, as yet incomplete, which leads to the restoration of all creation (Romans 8:28-30, Revelation 21:1-7).
- God is God of the old creation (cross) and the new creation (resurrection).
- But in all this there remains an element of mystery:
 - The moment of resurrection hidden from human eyes. How did it happen? What was said or done? In what ways did this moment of intimacy wipe away public humiliation of death on the cross?
 - What is the resurrected body like, and how does it relate to the body as we know it?
 - Reluctance of Gospel-writers to speculate about the resurrection event makes it unique and sets it apart from eg the miracles of Jesus.
 - Gospel accounts of what happened afterwards are fragmented, somehow unreal, apparently inconsistent (contrast passion narratives).
 - If the resurrection inaugurated the new creation and the start of the end-times with Jesus the firstfruits, what does that imply for the world and church 2000 years later?
- So while our understanding of God is transformed, we don't know everything. In some senses our faith remains vulnerable through absence of historically verifiable facts. This forces us onto different ground, where some are uncomfortable, ground that relies on the testimony of the witnesses (cf Hebrews 12:1-2) and on our own personal relationship with God through Jesus. Ironically this ground may prove firmer than facts.
- One certainty is that resurrection is the key to any understanding of God

What does the Resurrection tell us about Jesus?

- In talking about God already said a lot about Jesus. In addition:
- By offering himself in obedience to God to a death of disgrace (Hebrews 9:14), Jesus has shown that death, and the sin of which death is the ultimate example, is powerless. The resurrection confirms this and transforms every instinctive idea about death and sin (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).
- The obedience of Jesus extends beyond the grave. God raised him. He was raised by God. Therefore he is risen. Helplessness of the cross becomes empowerment of the resurrection.
- In resurrection God has vindicated the life, ministry and death of Jesus. So God has confirmed what the Jewish religious leaders considered blasphemous eg
 - Forgiving sins (Mark 2:1-12)
 - Challenging the Law of the OT (Matthew 5:17-48)

- Entering Jerusalem and 'cleansing' the Temple (Mark 11:1-18)
- The Son of Man sitting at God's right hand (Mark 14:61b-64)
- God has revealed Jesus as he is – Son of God (Romans 1:4); Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36).
- Vindication and revelation combine as precursors to Jesus' ascension and exaltation (Philippians 2:8-11) in fulfilment of OT prophecies (eg Daniel 7:13-14).
- Jesus is the firstfruits – the exemplar or model for his followers. His resurrection assures us of our own future resurrection. (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
- Jesus is the one through whom God speaks to us (Hebrews 1:1-4) and blesses us (Hebrews 13:20-21).
- Because of all this, Jesus' message expands beyond his own people. The OT prophecies aimed at one nation, Israel, are redirected to the new Israel – people of the new covenant – Jews and Gentiles alike (Galatians 3:13-14,26-29).

What does the Resurrection tell us about the church?

- Cross and resurrection are central to the Gospel, so no church without them.
 - Luke's Gospel and Acts gives us this sequence:
Crucifixion → burial → resurrection → appearances → ascension
→ worship and waiting → Pentecost
- Church born out of birth pangs of new creation (Moltmann)
- *Fellowship with Christ in the Spirit is the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and the fellowship of his death. But in being this it is also at the same time the fellowship of his resurrection through newness of life and participation through hope in his life in glory.* (Moltmann – The Church in the Power of the Spirit p59)
 - For a direct connection between the risen Christ and the early church through the Spirit see Revelation ch 1-3, esp 1:18,2:7,17 etc.
 - Through Holy Spirit church soon accepted gentile members (Acts 11:44-48); Galatians 2:7-10). Transformed church from Jewish sect to worldwide movement.
 - Ever since the church has had the risen Christ at its head, bringing peace and reconciliation (Colossians 1:18-20)
 - Transformation of disciples:
Unlearned followers → failures of understanding and faith → cowards
→ witnesses → reinstatement → commissioning → worshipping →
inspiration → preaching → leadership → mission → martyrdom
 - Their perception that everything had changed. Resurrection as sign that the end-times had started. God had broken into history. History irreversibly changed.

Why is the resurrection so important for us?

- Disciples' transformation available to us (2 Corinthians 4:10-11,16; Romans 8:13-17;6:5,8).
- Resurrection not only significant for the event itself, or post-resurrection appearances, but for what it tells us about God and Jesus:
*A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy.* (George Herbert)
- Mark's enigmatic ending at 16:8 could be intended to encourage his readers to complete the story themselves and take the step of faith.
- We can claim all that resurrection means: Jesus our model – the firstfruits; guarantee of sins forgiven; a living hope (1 Peter 1:3-5).
- So we too are children of God and can have same intimate relationship with him that Jesus did (Romans 8:12-16); we share the glory of the risen Lord (8:17).

- Power of death destroyed so we are liberated from fear, not just of death itself but of all the fears associated with the power of death – torture, violence, depression, disease etc.
- The resurrection may be a route to peace for us:

Peace! That is the spirit of the resurrection. The stories are all quiet. And the spirit of the resurrection stories is a spirit of peace: angels in a tomb with a message; Jesus appearing and saying, "Peace be with you"; conversation and communion on the road to Emmaus. Telling and listening to the stories had made clear the spirit of the mystery of the resurrection and the character of life after death: peace. And the stories had transformed our grief and conflict into a measure of peace and community. (TEBoomershine – Story Journey)
- So far talking about resurrection as an event. Paul gives another way of connecting with power of resurrection – through metaphor - offering different perspectives eg:
 - baptism (esp Romans 6:1-4)
 - conversion (Galatians 2:19-20)
 - living in the Spirit (Romans 8:9-11)
 - holy living (Romans 6:12-14)
- Appropriating resurrection metaphor in terms of rebirth in our lives or world eg:

I believe in resurrection because I have experienced it. Encountering a stone in my life that I could not remove on my own, surrendering to a God whose power can move stones - and mountains - and then receiving the life God wants for me is resurrection. ...

Every single day, one day at a time, I have to do as those women did on that cold Easter morning: look up, and see, and believe that the stone has already been rolled back. ...

Surrendering to the truth and power of the resurrection means embracing the knowledge that there is no good excuse anymore for letting those stones get in the way. The stone has been rolled back, and now the hard work of living a resurrected life begins, for each of us. Living our lives in that truth means doing courageous and mighty things in Jesus' name. Surrendering to the resurrection means letting go of all the anxiety and fear that can so easily grip us and leave us powerless, and experiencing the joy of the resurrected life. (Gene Robinson – The Eye of the Storm p62)
- However we choose to approach the resurrection, it can only be known through faith, not scientific proof. But that faith available to us in our ordinary experiences. The Bible explains that – risen Jesus appeared to the disappointed and negative; they were slow to recognise him; they doubted. But still Jesus commissioned them. Still God sent them his Holy Spirit.
- Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and I am life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die' (John 11:25-26) and 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10). That fullness of life is ours if we want it precisely because God raised Jesus from death to new life.

The Resurrection by Albrecht Durer (1511)

