

## Easter III 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018 ChCh-St. Luke's

**Readings:** Acts 3:12-19  
 1 John 3:1-7  
 Luke 24:36b-48

### Reflection

When did you last feel terrified? Or frightened.....or startled? For me, it was a Wednesday, in the fourth week of Lent. The moment was memorable. .... But what was the occasion? Well it began with a walk up the Christchurch Adventure Park's uphill track where last year's Port Hills fires caused so much devastation. The once tree-clothed hillsides are now barren wastelands, with occasional black stumps and blackened tree skeletons. Cycle-tracks zig-zag and loop their way across the slopes like massive scars.....but on those barren slopes there are already signs of new life, a riot of seedlings sprouting around blackened stumps, and new trees planted. *They* will – in time – re-clothe the park in verdant green, bringing fresh shade and shelter, but for now, the uninterrupted views across our city are absolutely breath-taking. From Brighton's shoreline to the Kaikoura's, the Summit Road and SugarLoaf, and across the Canterbury Plains to the Southern Alps, the surprise of something new – a view once hidden and now revealed – is a wonderful gift. (I can't help but witness enthusiastically to this panoramic revelation!)

But back to my moment of terror. Having puffed my way to the windswept summit, I now needed to descend. The benign-looking chairlift beckoned, so I found my way to the boarding point - "*Just sit down as the chair arrives and pull the safety bar down*" was the friendly instruction. Next thing I was launched! Time slowed, my heart-rate increased, doubt surfaced, and belief was suspended as I too was suspended .....physically, well above solid earth, rocky cliffs and twisting dirt tracks - hanging from a cable, and descending the 400-plus metres from hilltop to the valley shadows below. The adrenalin-fuelled moment of terror was soon replaced by inner peace as I descended in tangible silence. Remnants of forest seemed to enfold me in the narrowing valley slopes and bellbird's sang a welcome home. Joy and elation followed, as my feet returned to earth. All I wanted then, was to share

my experience – my joy and elation – with others. I’ve become something of an adventure park evangelist!

The slopes of our Port Hills have - through my lived experience - become icons of death and resurrection. I delighted in sharing the whole experience with a clergy colleague on a reflective walk on Holy Saturday. It was a meaningful precursor to the celebrations of Easter.

So when did you last feel terrified? Or frightened.....or startled? Or experience doubt in *your* hearts? How did Christ meet *you* in that place? And what about joy in your disbelieving, or wondering? This gamut of human emotion is packed into the opening verses of today’s gospel reading. The context is of course, another post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to His disciples, following as it does, the encounter on the Road to Emmaus. And again, Jesus meets the disciples *just* where they are (physically, emotionally and spiritually), just where they need the reality of his presence - speaking peace into their traumatized hearts; offering a tangible experience of his physical, earthly presence. Wounds, flesh and bones, inviting touch, eating their food.

But there is more. Luke’s accounts of both this and the Emmaus Road encounter describe Jesus reminding his friends of God’s BIG story – God’s LOVE story of redemption – the story that includes them..... (and us)

*‘Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 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, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’ Lk.24:45-48*

Jesus’ death and burial and resurrection has been described as the greatest parable, a parable in flesh and blood, a parable embodied.<sup>1</sup> The parable of all parables. The great theme upon

---

<sup>1</sup> Br. Mark Brown, The Message, SSJE, 2011

which infinite variations are possible. ‘Leave the small, dark, confining places of life—come out into the broad and bright places and discover the freedom to rise to your full height.’ Or in the shorthand message of Jesus suggested by one commentator: *‘Join me in the Resurrection—don’t wait ‘til you’re dead.’*<sup>2</sup>

The witness of Peter in the Temple, described in today’s Acts reading, embodies Christ’s transforming resurrection power. Beyond the dark confines of terror, fear and wondering, Peter (the uneducated fisherman) rises to full stature as he addresses the astonished crowd at Solomon’s portico. Peter had – in the living faith and name of the risen Jesus - just healed a man crippled from birth. The astonished Israelites that crowded around Peter, John and the healed man who clung to them, could have been described as *‘startled, experiencing doubt in their hearts; and in their joy, disbelieving and wondering’*. Peter’s confident and powerful witness, as he told God’s Love Story and included his hearers in it, called them to repentance – called them to turn back to the covenant God who longed for *their* healing and restoration, offered through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

For Jesus to stand to his full height, he had to leave the small, dark place of the tomb. And so it is for us. For us to rise up to our full stature, we are called to leave the small, dark places of life. We are called to leave the many and various tombs of this earthly life, and find our way to the broad, open and light filled places.

“Join me in the Resurrection,” Jesus calls out to us today. “Even now, even today—don’t wait ‘til you’re dead.” Come out of the small, dark, confining places of life into the broad and bright places—stand up, rise up to your full height.

Resurrection is woven into the texture of life in the world we live in now. We understand Christ to be the Word – the one through whom all things came to be. We understand Christ as one abiding in us, as we abide in him. “I am the Resurrection” he said. “I will be with

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

you always.” We can be alert to the possibility of resurrection all around us—resurrection in all its manifestations, even in the most ordinary things.

Last week I asked the question:

With whom might *we* share Christ’s peace, and reconciling love?

In other words, how might we witness and live out resurrection?

Yesterday, I had the privilege and delight of attending Buddha’s Birthday Festival of Peace at the Buddhist Temple in Riccarton. I did so on behalf of Bishop Victoria and Dean Lawrence Kimberley. In that capacity I was invited to lead a Christian prayer. Later, there was a Hindu prayer offered, and a number of civic dignitaries spoke. It was a wonderful occasion and a heartwarming service, followed by refreshments and further celebrations open to the public. The expressed commitment to living simply, mindfully, generously and co-operatively in peace, shared at this multicultural, multi-faith celebration was resurrection embodied. The hospitality offered to all, was resurrection embodied.

I hope I will have the privilege of hearing something of your resurrection stories too!

For in the words of today’s recessional hymn:

*‘We are the Body now -  
our feet must mark the Way,  
our speech declare the Word  
and live it day by day,  
the resurrection story ours,  
disciples gifted with new powers!’*