

## Bennochy church 21st April 2019 (EASTER)

The friends of Jesus did not make the connection. In spite of all that Jesus had said, they believed, that they would find Jesus body in the tomb. They were there to embalm his body.

Nothing more. And remember, the disciples, well, they were a 'no show'! They had not even bothered to come to the tomb. Women's work? Maybe. I want to suggest, that there was no expectation, among the women, or the disciples, of resurrection. Even at this point, so late in the story. Their understanding was, Jesus is dead. Fact.

Two reactions are recorded by Luke. One is puzzlement, and the other is fear. *What is going on here? Who moved the stone? Where is his body?* We are then told, God speaks. That is enough to make anyone fearful! Fearful because they do not understand what is happening. These mysterious messengers from God then reveal the truth. If you don't believe in angels, if that is what they were, at least hear their words. *"Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here, but raised up. Remember how he told you when you were still back in Galilee that he had to be handed over to sinners, be killed on a cross, and in three days rise up."* (Luke 24: 5-7, Message ) It prompts the women to remember what Jesus had said. This was the moment of their understanding. Pieces of the jigsaw, starting to come together.

Well, it was then off to tell the boys. *What a load of tosh. You don't actually expect us to believe that, do you?* Had it been three wasted years with these guys! Witnesses to miracles, healings, parables and just the experience of being with Jesus. What was up with them? What was up with was; they were human. Try and get into their heads, and know that we would have reacted exactly the same way. *Rise from the dead? Come on!*

They were in despair. Their hopes shattered as a result of how Jesus had been treated. *What about all the promises he had made?* They were in fear of their lives, in case what happened to Jesus would happen to them. They were probably in hiding, so a journey to a guarded tomb, for them, was full of danger.

Did the women look at them in exasperation. *Are you just going to sit there? Are you not going to see for yourself?* That is the Christian faith in a nutshell. You need to go and see for yourself. Staying put is no use. We might have guessed that the first move would be made by the bold Peter. First to recognise who Jesus was. Peter, hero of the storm, the 'water walker' but also a man full of remorse and guilt. Peter who three times denied Jesus in the courtyard. He makes the first move. He is off to see for himself. His journey of faith takes him to an empty tomb and is amazed at what he sees. It seems that no one else had the guts to follow. They stayed in hiding.

The empty tomb, by itself, does not answer the Easter question. What happened to Jesus? Up to this point, Peter now knows Jesus is not in the tomb. That is it. The resurrection encounters are still to come. The Christian faith is not easy and the Easter story places huge obstacles in the way of our human understanding. It is not logical. It breaks all the rules. This is not a normal story of death and life.

At Easter, we need to have the guts to make our journey to the tomb, see for ourselves, and have our assumptions about God challenged. It is puzzling. It takes us beyond how we understand life and the world around us. If our expectation is of finding Jesus' body in the tomb, what does it mean if we then find the tomb empty? That is the Easter conundrum. Where is Jesus? Peter finds himself in an in-between moment. The tomb is empty but he is yet to meet Jesus. Maybe that is where we are. Part way along the story.

This is not a story to be understood. It is a story about faith. That which we cannot yet see or understand. It is a story about hope. Because if Jesus is not in the tomb, we can meet him elsewhere. As Peter pondered in the empty tomb, I like to think he remembered the upper room, and the word of Jesus, *this is my body, broken for you*. I like to think it was there, on his own, that he began to make the connections. The life of faith is all about making such connections. I don't think we ever

meet God all at once, but are there not moments when God miraculously breaks in, and we move on.

This Easter, let's have a go at walking on water, and trust that Christ will take our hand. This Easter, may God sit with us in the courtyard and forgive our denials. This Easter, may we stand in the empty tomb and wonder, 'where is Jesus'. This Easter, in faith and in hope, we will break bread and we will share wine. *This is my body, which is broken for you. Amen.*