

**Script for Podcast – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

It's difficult to work out how to preach on the Resurrection two weeks after the 'main event' of Easter Sunday.

We had all that tension and anticipation during Lent which built up to the excitement of the ultimate day of 'Good News.' So there's a danger at this stage in the Easter season of finding yourself almost trying to re-create the same impact as that which was felt on the Resurrection Day itself.

We know that EVERY Sunday is a celebration of the effects of the Resurrection but that shouldn't mean that the calendar needs to be turned back in some way.

In this text, the reactions of the disciples – joy, fear, disbelief – would more easily be dealt with by our reflections on the events of Easter Day but this all serves – helpfully I think – to make us reflect rather more deeply on the resurrection event and its implications. It should raise questions like:

What was the risen Jesus like?

What does Resurrection actually mean?

How do we feel that Jesus is present amongst us now?

Jesus finds various ways to confront the disbelief of his followers and it all can serve to remind us that our questions will inevitably be very similar to theirs at that time.

How can you talk about the presence of someone who has died? (personal reflection at this point)

What was the risen Jesus like?

First, in response to the disciples' terror that they were seeing ghost, Jesus does two things. He offers his hands and feet (although there is no mention of scars or wounds as in the Gospel of John) to be examined by them. And he eats a piece of fish in front of them. So he shows he isn't an apparition.

It would be easy here to start thinking – well maybe it was just a physical resurrection but you need to balance the picture with the earlier story in Luke when Jesus appears to the Emmaus travellers. He comes there as an unrecognised stranger until he is recognised in the breaking of bread.

So the presence of Jesus is mysterious but it is also 'real'. This is more than just the physical resuscitation of a dead body.

But even after the 'hands and feet' offer and the eating of the fish, doubts still seem to remain amongst the disciples. So Jesus does something else. He recalls words spoken during his earthly ministry of how everything written about him in scripture had to be fulfilled and then he tries to help the disciples understand by using a bit of scriptural interpretation.

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This second bit of interpretation is essential because understanding the real meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection is only fully achieved by studying and understanding the relevant scripture.

There is no historical 'proof' to convince anyone that in the final analysis, death and resurrection are the way that God's promises are fulfilled.

For the writer of Luke's Gospel, the Cross and the Empty Tomb are nothing more than astonishing stories if looked at in isolation from the Bible texts that explain properly what they signify. What is critical about the Resurrection of Jesus isn't that it's a miracle but that it brings to fruition God's plans and purposes!

At the same time, the crucified and risen Jesus is the clue for understanding the scriptures! While they provide the context for understanding Jesus, Jesus provides the key for understanding the scriptures!

The third 'initiative' that Jesus takes in our text is to spell out the mission waiting to be fulfilled by the disciples as they become Apostles. Preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins; the move from Jerusalem to 'all the nations'; the disciples themselves being living witnesses; and preaching the promise of divine power. Actually, verses 47 to 49 effectively comprise what amounts to the 'table of contents' for the Book of Acts!

So we are helped to realise that the resurrection of Jesus isn't just inextricably linked to the study of scripture but also to the need to engage in mission.

Through their various experiences of the resurrected Jesus, the disciples learned that they didn't need to ask in what form he would appear.

If we accept that trying to 'investigate' the resurrection for 'proof' whether scientifically or historically, isn't going to get us very far, then the conclusion at which we arrive seems inevitable – we will understand the significance of the wonder of the resurrection when we become fully involved in the messages of repentance and forgiveness.

So it's not just resurrection and scripture that belong together – so do resurrection and mission. Amen