

Sunday Sermon

Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – Sunday 18th April 2021

Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7; Luke 24.36-48

In the first letter of John chapter 3, in one of the other texts set for today, the 3rd Sunday of Easter, he writes, “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.”

It is part of a longer passage that is full of wonder at how God has chosen the human race and at what the future holds for us. It provides a more considered reflection on the confused wonder that the disciples are feeling in the reading we have just heard, as Jesus appears among them in Luke’s gospel late on the Day of Resurrection. They had seen him suffer and die, yet now he was among them, not just as spirit, not just as a ghost, but with a new kind of physicality. “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.”

Well actually in the resurrection appearances of Jesus, there are tantalising glimpses of that revelation. Luke is witnessing to the physicality of Jesus as he appears among his disciples. He has the marks of his living and suffering. His body still takes food. Yet he is now more than this. A key teaching of the Christian faith is that when we die, in God’s love and power, this new kind of renewed and resurrected physicality awaits us too. It’s what the creeds mean when they state the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.”

It all seems so extraordinary; it is extraordinary! But how can rational people believe it? In St John’s gospel, in a similar account of Jesus appearing among his disciples, after Thomas has doubted, Jesus says, “Do you believe because you have seen? Blessed are those who have not seen, yet who believe.” Blest indeed! For the capacity to believe in such things that are yet to be fully revealed, comes from the experience of discovering that you are already a blest child of God.

How can we believe in such a physical resurrection for ourselves, for those we have loved, for Prince Philip? Firstly by paying good attention to our walk with God in the here and now, here in this life. When we do this, led by Jesus and guided by the Spirit, we do discover what it means to be a child of God; beloved, and learning the art of divine loving, with all its joys and its sacrifices. Secondly by paying attention in our worshipping and praying, our living and loving, to the unseen presence of the risen Jesus amongst us. By learning that we are God’s children now, already, and that his love will never let us go.

Yet, what we will become, does indeed still remain a mystery. We can, only, wonder at it. It’s good to become comfortable with contemplating this unknown. It is truly something you can and should leave in God’s loving hands. What you can trust in, is that you will still be your redeemed self, and that you will still be together with those you love, and that all will be reconciled in God’s love. Amen.

CJ. 18.4.21