



GOSPEL GOSSIP

‘My Lord and my God!’

John 20. 19-31

Sunday 27 April

For many people, Easter has come and gone, along with all the chocolate! But the Church continues to celebrate the good news that Jesus has risen from the dead for fifty days, when Eastertide concludes with the Feast of Pentecost, embracing the Feast of the Ascension en route. The gospels do not end with the empty tomb but with accounts of Jesus’ appearances to his disciples.

This week’s gospel reading finds the disciples gathered behind closed doors, which are no barrier to the risen Christ. As is often the case, his first words to them are, ‘Peace be with you.’ He then goes on to co-mission them to carry on his work of preaching and teaching, following the example of the Father’s sending of him. In St John’s gospel, this is accentuated by the granting to them of the Holy Spirit, and although this may not accord with other accounts, the essentials remain the same: Jesus’ followers are empowered by the gifting of the Holy Spirit, in this instance imparted by Jesus’ breathing on them. His commissioning of them is complete and utter – in God’s name they are even able to forgive sins.

- Is Easter over for you?
- How are you going to show signs of the resurrection life yourself?
- Do you believe that you also have been tasked with making the Good News known?
- How have you experienced the risen Christ in your life?
- What does it mean to ‘receive the Holy Spirit’?

Of course, not all the disciples were present in the house, and were prepared to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. Thomas had made his doubts clear, and stated that unless he was allowed to touch Jesus’ wounded hands and feet, and the spear mark in his side, he would not believe. Not that he *could* not believe, but that he *would* not believe. He wanted to believe, but he had to have personal proof – he wasn’t to accept the evidence of others.

Thomas reflects many of us in that we don’t believe the seemingly impossible unless we have personal proof. It doesn’t matter sometimes how many people tell us something, or how much evidence there is, unless we are satisfied ourselves we will not believe. It is the same with faith. We may smile at the old rhyme, Jesus loves me, this I know, because the bible tells us so’, but despite the evidence of Scripture, 2000 years of human witness, the number and variety of church buildings – we will struggle to belief. And this struggle isn’t just about believing in the first place, but continuing in our belief, once we have accepted that Jesus is risen. We may frequently have to re-affirm our faith and like Thomas, say ‘My Lord and my God.’

- Can you understand Thomas’ doubts?
- Are they your doubts, too?
- What will convince you of the resurrection?
- Do you believe ‘conversion’ (accepting the resurrection of Christ) is a one-off, or an on-going process?
- How do you acknowledge Jesus as King and God?

St Augustine wrote: ‘We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song’. Without Easter there would be no Christian faith. Jesus would just be one of many godly people who influenced for the good those around him, and then died. The resurrection is the core of the Christian faith; sometimes we are strong in our belief of it, at other times we may not be. But Jesus remains the same: he is our King and our God.