

## **Sermon for Eucharist Easter 2 2019**

**May I speak in the name of God  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, amen**

Have you noticed  
How today's readings  
Focus on the physical?

There are few things  
More physical  
Than praising with clanging cymbals  
Unless of course  
It is praising with  
Tambourines and dance

And the physicality of the risen Lord  
Is central to today's Gospel

This passage immediately follows  
The Easter day Gospel reading

Mary's encounter with the risen Lord  
in the Garden  
In the early morning  
When Mary only recognises Jesus  
When he calls her by her name

It is in the evening of that same day  
that the disciples meet together  
fearfully  
In a house which is locked  
For fear of the Jews

The Gospel says  
Jesus came and stood among them  
and said  
'peace be with you'

Yet it is only after  
Jesus has shown the disciples  
his hands and his side  
Confirming to them  
that this is Jesus who they knew  
and followed

it only after this physical confirmation  
that the disciples rejoiced  
when they saw the Lord

then Jesus does three things  
he commissions his disciples in words  
'as the Father has sent me,  
So I send you'.

And in action  
Breathing on them  
The gift of the Holy Spirit  
Sharing with them his power  
To forgive or retain sins

'But Thomas  
One of the twelve  
Was not with them'

And Thomas will not accept their witness  
That they have seen the Lord

Thomas wants to see Jesus himself

Thomas declares his need to touch  
the very wounds of Jesus  
to feel the mark of the nails  
to thrust his hand  
into the wound in Jesus side  
before he will believe

now  
as an aside  
I have always thought  
That the appellation  
'doubting' to Thomas  
was and is unfair

Thomas feels very human  
Very like each one of us

We like to see for ourselves  
And we live in a time  
Where we can instantly see  
What is euphemistically called  
Breaking news

Often before the regular news media  
Has caught up  
There will be images  
On twitter and facebook  
And instagram

Thomas is also being true to himself

throughout John's Gospel  
Thomas has been the one asking questions

Earlier in John's gospel  
Before the events of Jesus passion  
And crucifixion

Jesus in his last discourse  
To his disciples  
Talks about preparing a place for them  
In his Father's house  
And Jesus says to them  
'You know the way to the place I am going'

And it is Thomas who replies  
'Lord, we do not know where you are going.  
How can we know the way?'

And in response Jesus says,  
'I am the way, and the truth, and the life

Thomas asks questions  
And is given answers  
On behalf of all of us

Thomas is also shown  
as a man of loyalty and courage

After the death of Lazarus,  
Jesus announces that he will go to Lazarus  
Through Judea

The disciples are horrified  
Because it was in Judea  
That the authorities tried to stone Jesus

And Thomas says  
Let us also go,  
that we may die with him.'

There is no question  
That Thomas is loyal  
and full of courage

What is being questioned  
is his faith

Thomas missed  
Jesus first appearance in the locked house

But the second time  
A week later  
Thomas is there with the others

And Jesus  
After giving the same greeting  
'peace be with you'

Tells Thomas to touch his wounds  
To push his hand  
Into the wound in his side

The text does not say  
if Thomas does this

Instead Thomas makes  
a profound declaration of Faith  
he says:  
'My Lord and My God'

Thomas, more than the others  
In this encounter  
Has recognised the fullness  
Of who Jesus is  
And confessed the divinity of Jesus

And I find it striking

That this moment  
Where Jesus' Divinity  
Is recognised  
And proclaimed

Is a moment  
Where Jesus humanity  
The word made flesh  
Is so evident

Jesus body carries the wounds  
of his suffering

The acute pain is over  
The suffering is redeemed  
But the wounds remain

And this year  
The physicality of this reading  
Has really struck me

Partly because  
During Passiontide  
I walked the Stations of the Cross  
On the University campus most days  
A time to reflect  
On the reality of Christ's suffering

Partly because of the images  
From the attacks on Sri Lankan churches  
On Easter day  
The sickening violence of Christ's death  
Became disturbingly real

That reality is present  
In today's other readings

Peter and the apostles  
State that they must obey God  
Not human authority  
Despite knowing where that obedience  
That witness to the Good News of Jesus  
Will take them

In the reading from Revelation  
John the divine  
Calls Jesus  
The faithful witness  
Who loves us  
And freed us from our sins  
By his blood

in this cathedral  
is an art work

called the Wounds of Christ  
by the artist Michael Clarke

you may have never noticed this work  
because it is human sized

The work is made up of five small sculptures  
Set in the stonework of the Cathedral

Spreading out  
From the West Door to the transepts

And up by the high Altar

Put together the sculptures  
are about the size of my hand

My hand which is about the size  
of a human heart

a sculpture  
which for me  
is about Jesus present with us  
holding us within his body

Jesus' body as represented in this building

and Jesus' body  
which is all of us

for we are the body of Christ  
here  
in this place

Jesus shows himself to Thomas  
And then says  
'Blessed are those who have not seen  
And yet believe'

And we surely fall into this category  
because we do not encounter Jesus  
in the flesh  
as Mary Magdalene  
and Thomas  
and the disciples  
encountered him

But through the gift of the Holy Spirit  
We continue to encounter Jesus  
In word and sacrament

In scripture and in the Eucharist  
Christians have encountered Jesus  
And witnessed to him  
Over centuries

this is true for us today

we share the reality of Jesus with us

as we meet together in worship  
to sing and move and pray and listen

in the knowledge  
that Jesus is always present

Always ready to meet us  
Always ready to breathe new life into us

And through us  
To breathe new life  
into God's church  
and into God's world

amen