

Easter Day Homily 2020  
St.Margaret of Antioch Leigh-on-Sea

“He saw and he believed”

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When the beloved disciple reaches the tomb he hears nothing touches nothing and only sees an empty tomb with some clothes – and yet he believes. It is a testament to the closeness of his life with Jesus in all its physicality with Jesus, that through the absence of those things he is able to believe. Others notably the women in Matthew’s gospel have and will see and touch and hear but he does not. Belief of course is not about knowing everything it’s about relationship a very different concept – a concept that a parent can understand when absent from their child and is still able to say “I believe in them”. The Beloved disciple is now in a very new living relationship with His lord who lives forever.

In the virtual world that many have been inhabiting it is not so much seeing things that I suspect people have missed but touching and hearing for real. The phone call, party app, and skype is all well and good but limited – it’s not real.

For many of you, you may have listened to some holy week and Easter hymns or music but it is not the same as being there and being part of it.

We can hear the music when we read the kingdom words of the last verse of amazing grace.

When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

Being in God’s love and in his kingdom is what we celebrate today. We celebrate the resurrection of him who opened his arms for us on the cross and welcomed us into that life and kingdom. A Kingdom the beloved disciple entered when he entered an empty tomb. We may ask : where has the emptiness taken us this last week?

On Palm Sunday I said that a week seems a very long time in the life of the world we occupy at present which seems a way off from the brightness of the hymn. We were reminded a week ago that Jesus went from the seeming bright lights

and adulation of the crowds when he arrived at Jerusalem to the darkness of his betrayal and the agonies and loneliness of the tomb. We were reminded though, that it's *our* senses and feelings that change and are fickle, not those of Jesus. Through all the changes Jesus doesn't change – God doesn't change. But we are called to – to see differently, hear differently, to touch differently. Oh how the hand of human kind needs to touch this world very differently now to its current heavy and grasping ways. We are called to become a new creation, new community, a new world.

On Maundy Thursday that night before his death, Jesus had that last supper with his disciples and washed their feet. I called it God in ordinary things. For it's about what he does and what he calls us to do – “where there is love and charity there is God”. How that chimes with whatever is good to have come out of the crisis we are living through with the kindness of strangers and newly found friends.

On Good Friday even his friends for whom he has done so much abandon him. And yet in his aloneness he offers nothing but love and forgiveness from the cross. If he is a hero he is totally unsung and there was no recognition no medal. But because of who he is, not what he does, the curtain of the temple is torn in two and God is revealed as he truly is. A God who suffers and offers eternal life; not tarnished medals or fading recognition.

Now Easter day – if we treat it as an isolated event it is almost meaningless and perhaps even worse – a sort of vacuous optimism rather than a rooted hope grounded in the blood and gut of the realities of life and our world. The Beloved disciple did not just turn up late and see a happy ending – he suddenly saw, felt and heard it all afresh, and in a new light that would never be dimmed. Without the story it is trite and cannot confront the dark forces of our age. But seen in the light of the whole week the risen life of Christ has the power to defeat and transform them.

May you have a Blessed Easter.

*The Revd Fr. David Wylie RN  
St. Margaret of Antioch  
Leigh-on-Sea.  
Easter Day 2020.*

