

Fifth Sunday of Easter yr C

Acts 14.21-27, Revelation, 21 1-5, John 13.31-33, 34-35

Behold I make all things new

Sadly I haven't got one with me to demonstrate but I'm sure you have all had a stick of seaside rock. They last for ages and if the end get a bit dusty and dirty in mums handbag or the pocket you can always break the end off and start again. The Word Southend or maybe Bognor or Blackpool magically flows through it wherever you break it. In our faith and the bible there are key words that flow through it whether you break in and one of those is writ large today. NEW.

Jesus calls his commandment of love new? How is it new? The people of Israel and ourselves have the OT law – love God with all your might and your neighbour as self. What is *new* about Jesus commandment and what is behind the vision of the risen Christ on the throne of heaven who makes all things *new*?

Note it is not about making new things it's about making everything that already is new. It is recreation not recycling of what already exists into something else. Nothing is to be lost in the love of God – how gently but powerfully we heard that from Father Bruce at my mother's funeral on Thursday.

Jesus himself shows why his commandment is new. Not in the sense of breaking from the old law but fulfilling it and seeing it in all its glory. Jesus is not content simply to say a new commandment I give you love one another but goes beyond what was understood to add AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. Understanding the force of this addition demand we know who Christ is, one with God, and yet how he loves us more than himself. He does not cling to equality with God but empties himself taking the form of a servant. He is obedient even to death on a cross. St. Pauls words

will be familiar to you and also though rich for our sake he became poor.

The old law seems like a mutual and level exchange to love others as self – but Jesus loves more than himself. He is one in nature with God and yet submits to the worst the world can offer for our sake. The extent of his love is new indeed.

Its purpose is not to make a better version of people in the future, or to set higher standards for the quality of relationships and behaviours in the world for the future. The purpose is to re-make what has already been made what already exists and what has gone wrong or fallen short of its purpose. In a world where if its damaged or broken including our relationships and lives the reaction is to throw away and get a new one – this making new does so with what we already have. This is to be made new and fulfilled.

All of the sacraments have this at their heart a dying to the old and rising to the new. We have people preparing for marriage at the moment. Their married lives are to be made new not simply given an official stamp upon what already is. And we are not talking a static fixed newness like driving a new car out of the showroom knowing that muddy boots and stick of rock will spoil its pristine state. Our baptismal relationship with God and his world is dynamic not static. It isn't to fade and age but grow in newness through confession and embrace of life being made new at whatever stage of life we find ourselves.

Supremely of course our faith our Easter faith says that even death painful tearful and sorrowful though it be is not the end but the beginning of something new.

It is not a nice thought for the end of life but a way of life that reveals its truth when practiced. The amazing growth of the

church we read of in acts – today at Antioch our ancestral home – is because people see Christians are people who do not live and love for self alone but live for and love others even more than themselves.

As we move on further into this Easter season and then into Pentecost we would do well to be mindful of the newness of each day the newness our faith bring to old ways and relationships seeing them in a new light and ourselves with new purpose.

So we give thanks and praise for the one who makes all things new and offers life in all its fullness. We must pray that the Holy Spirit may help make this so in our lives and relationships and then reflect nothing less to the communities and throw away world we inhabit that Christ can make all things new.