

When I started reading the Gospel to prepare my sermon I thought - oh this is odd - it starts off the same way as last week's = the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples in a room and saying "peace be with you", though then last week's reading is taken over by the doubting Thomas theme which is usually the focus for sermons that day.

Last week we heard John's account, Now we have today's account from a different gospel - Luke, starting off the same way : Jesus appeared and said "Peace be with you", and then it continues in a different vein.

"Peace.... be.... with you."

As Andrew asked last week - how would we define peace?

We know when it is there in a situation and we definitely know when it is missing, but it is like all emotions - easily damaged, incredibly powerful when achieved- life giving and transformative when present-

Surely it is God breaking through into our lives?

Jesus said "peace be with you" . He knew his disciples were distraught with grief and would find his reappearance confusing and scary, so the first thing he says is to try and bring divine calm, to break through their heightened anguish and their descent into despair.

But the fact is , Jesus needs to convince his disciples that he really has risen, that they are witnessing the fulfillment of the prophecies, that he *is* the Messiah, who died and has been raised to a new life 3 days later but that *now* crucially *they* are the ones who have to carry on the message of the gospel.

But it's all too quick, the disciples can't get their heads round Jesus's appearance- in their logical minds he shouldn't be there- he has died.

So Jesus tries to convince them with physical "human" proof - "Give me something to eat" Ghosts don't eat food, they know that....and that seems to have done the trick, broken the spell of disbelief and enabled them to take in what the scriptures had been saying all along- Jesus has conquered death.

Jesus has shown that he has gone through to the other side - to God's realm - and has opened the way for us to do the same - to have new life - and in the 40 days until his ascension into heaven , he appears many times to many people as proof of what is to come when followers of Jesus we are raised on the last day - we will have new bodies, not the ones we have now, we will be part of the new creation when through Christ's death and resurrection, all of God's creation will be saved and renewed

God is love. Jesus is the embodiment of love in human form.

True divine love that cares so much about the other that he always puts them first - to the point of taking our sins upon him and dying an innocent man on a cross. Loving us so deeply that he had to undergo the agony of being in the last few hours of his life torn away from God - which is what sin is - being away from God. Jesus had to do this in order to breach the divide - to gather up all our sins - our separateness from God - once and for all - and die a human death, trusting that God hadn't irretrievably forsaken him but would pull

him through to a new beginning , a transformed body , a divine glory that belonged in God's heavenly kingdom.

Jesus was raised from the dead on Easter Day - transformed to a new body - one we don't understand how it works but was physically real enough to eat fish and at the same time spiritually real enough to appear and disappear apparently contravening the laws of physics as we know them (at the moment - humans don't know all the answers to the universe....)

Jesus's peace unlocks the outpouring of God's love within us - it empowered the disciples to go out into the world and proclaim God's salvation and to heal people - as they said in the reading from Acts which is just after they had healed a man who was lame "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

"With God anything is possible"

Have you ever experienced being able to achieve something you never thought you would ever do? Or when you had a "God moment" , an epiphany when you knew God had helped you get through a stressful or totally new situation because you had paused, prayed , hoped for help?

So let us celebrate the risen Christ in awe and wonder - go with the flow - go with the emotion that Christ brings out -

If you feel criticised and hurt by things someone says - (think of the Pharisees , Peter "get behind me Satan")then take it on board and ask Jesus to lead you through it, how his peace and love can help you face it and transform it - (think of the intensely irritating but actually true saying " a bad experience will make you stronger if you learn from it")

If you are caught up in a transfiguration moment and are so overcome you don't know what you are saying - give thanks to God!

If you feel an overwhelming urge to praise God , sing etc- do it!

If shouting Alleluia brings a smile to your lips then enter into and enjoy the moment!

If you feel a sense of peace you can't explain - stop and think that God through Jesus might be behind it.....- the more we align ourselves to God, open our eyes, our minds and our ears, the more we will be aware of his everlasting presence with us and be transformed little by little to become more like Christ

Don't wait to work out the science - react to the positive and joyful emotions that is Christ's Spirit rising within you- his love bursting forth compelling you to share in the brilliance of the risen Christ -and transform your life and the world around you!

Alleluia!

Amen