Sermon: Easter 3B 2021 St Luke 24: 36b–48

Whilst preparing for this sermon, I came across a web site commentating on this passage. In the article it gave this anecdote:

A teacher asked her class of children who they thought was the greatest living person. Predictably they all reeled off a list of celebrities giving reasons why as they went. They even included George W Bush. But I, like the teacher, was surprised at the response of one little girl. When it came to her turn she said that the greatest living person was Jesus Christ! And this got me thinking. On Good Friday we commemorated the execution of Jesus – for he really did die – and on Easter Day and ever since then, we have celebrated his resurrection and rising to new life. Christ is therefore not dead but alive. Christ is therefore the greatest living person and yet we tend not to think of Jesus as such.

I don’t know what your mental picture of Jesus is but I would bet that it’s not of the risen Lord Jesus living with us here today – although I could be wrong? Perhaps your image is more of the Jesus we read about during the early years of his ministry – namely of a wondering preacher, teacher, and healer? Or perhaps it’s of Jesus seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven? Either of these images of Christ are correct, but they shouldn’t be the only images of Christ that we have. In order to visualise Christ we need to have many images, of which, Jesus still living with us is definitely one!

In our readings today this has been made abundantly clear to us. In our Gospel reading Luke portrays Jesus living with his disciples by eating with them after his resurrection – not the actions of someone still dead or of a ghost, but of someone alive. And in our reading from Acts we see how Peter urges his fellow Jews to believe in Jesus whom they had killed, but now lives.

Now, in order to understand how and why Peter was urging his fellow Jews to believe in Christ, we need to understand the context in which Peter was talking. Just prior this reading Peter had cured a lame begger in the name of Jesus Christ. The Jews did not believe that Jesus had risen to life so when they saw this man, a man whom they knew to be lame, walking they were over come with awe and started asking Peter how this could have happened. Peter’s response: Jesus is alive and this was done in his name. For many early followers this was the proof they needed to believe that Jesus was alive. This was hard for the early believers to comprehend, just like it is hard for this generation, our generation to comprehend – and yet it is the truth. Jesus is alive.

In the Eucharist service we declare this mystery of faith openly, and yet all too often we forget that Christ is alive. Christ is in our midst right now. He is with us when we leave this building. He is with us where ever we are. But we don’t tend to remember that. We only tend to think of Christ as being in a Church or in heaven. Yes, Jesus is in this Church and yes he is in heaven, but Jesus is also in you and me and millions of other people throughout the world. We never know how we will experience the risen, living Lord Jesus, but rest assured we will. It might be through prayer or might be through some stranger, but we will.

Just like the disciples didn’t expect Jesus to be in their midst in the upper room, as we heard from our Gospel reading, so Christ will come to us unexpectedly. The question is how will we receive him? Will we receive him with fear? I hope not. With Joy? – let’s pray.

Jesus is alive and the greatest living person. This is our Gospel. This is our message. Surely this has got to be worth sharing?