

Sermon for 26th April 2020 Third Sunday of Easter

By Rev Anne Pickard

Acts 2:14a,36-41

Luke 24:13-35

We begin with the first line of the reading from Acts

Acts 2:14a

Listen carefully, all you fellow Jews and fellow residents of Jerusalem!
Make no mistake about this!

Who was this person, so confident, full of authority and sure of what they were announcing?

Determined that people would listen and understand.
Make no mistake about this!

Was it a spokesperson for Herod?

No!

Was it the governor of the region?

No!

Was it even a priest of the Temple?

No!

It was Peter.

Peter who had been so unstable in his loyalty up until now; even denying his friendship with Jesus at the moment of crucifixion.

So, what had happened to change this weak and frightened man into a confident witness for Jesus and his word.

What changed Peter is what can change anyone, even ourselves, if we allow the change to happen.

It was the coming of the Holy Spirit who changed Peter and made all that he wanted to be true, but just dare not believe it, into a reality for him.

It was the Holy Spirit who fuelled Peter with the spiritual authority of Jesus to witness to God.

It is the Holy Spirit that places the conviction in our hearts and gives us the confidence to witness to others about our faith.

It doesn't happen like magic, one minute you are not sure and the next minute convinced!

There is usually, and sometimes a painful and extended, time of reflection and repentance, when God speaks to our hearts and heals the regrets and sorrows of our past. Only then can the Holy spirit enter and fuel us ready for witness and ministry to the world.

We can read an account, in John 21, of Peter, together with several other disciples, meeting with Jesus, after his resurrection, beside the sea of Galilee and he knew the joy of being forgiven and this energised him for his task of preaching and spreading the Word of forgiveness, love and compassion as brought by Jesus.

Peter had been prepared for this moment, just as the disciples we hear about in Luke were prepared as they walked the road to Emmaus.

They were so engrossed in their own confusion and disappointment that they didn't recognise Jesus as he spoke to them.

Even though they had walked with and listened to Jesus during his time on earth, their minds were still bogged down with the understanding that God would redeem his people from the domination of Rome through military might and a show of power.

They were, as we sometimes still do, missing the bigger picture.

They saw the death of Jesus as a sign of defeat – when actually it was the beginning of hope.

And so, he had to teach them by revisiting the teachings of Scripture;
Verse 25 of Luke 24

Then Jesus said to them, “You are such foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted by the prophets that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his time of glory?”

Maybe he quoted verses from Isaiah 53 who prophesied that the promised Messiah would not be beautiful or majestic that he would be despised and rejected and would suffer for the sins of the world.

No talk there of overcoming oppression and injustice with power and force.

The power they had been waiting for was not the power Jesus that brought.

The power that Jesus demonstrated was the greatest power of all.
Resurrection power.

This reality of resurrection life was a concept that took them by surprise.

And it takes many of us today by surprise too.

This resurrection power is beyond human understanding and this is why, on our own, we find it difficult to witness to it. We can talk about kindness and love and forgiveness for they too are part of the Christian

life; but many people who are not Christians possess these qualities in abundance and so, see no need to search any deeper.

And, because they rely on human understanding, the concept of life after death is unbelievable.

It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus working in us that we can say with the confidence of Peter,
Listen carefully, make no mistake about this,

**You're alive, You're alive
You have risen, Alleluia!
And the power and the glory is given
Alleluia, Jesus, to You**

And it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us all that we can meet with Jesus as we share bread and wine; and our hearts can be strangely warmed as we begin to seek understanding from Scripture, as happened to the disciples on the Emmaus road.

**Christ is risen
He is risen indeed
Alleluia**