

The Singularity of Faith

Easter Sunday (C)

Published in the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

Sunday, April 17, 2022

This for me has been an unusual Easter. I guess as a creature of habit, I have been used to the ebb and flow of the traditions and enjoy all that we do. This year, I have felt a little bit robbed, as the various circumstances in my life have provided a number of distractions and much of the time there has been a great deal of pressure to just get the things done thanks to missing days.

I had thought that we had lost the tradition of the great Biblical Epics on TV, but I discovered channel 92 had The Ten Commandments on yesterday. Not too bad, but I love the scene of the Exodus – Could only be described as Chaos with geese and kiks and cattle and wagons and pillaged goods etc. Well worth a look if you haven't seen it.

Whether it is the call to crucify our Lord, to stone Stephen for blasphemy or to hound Paul, there is something of a collective evil in the Mob. Indeed a reflection on history recent or otherwise would tell us, that when people get together, they generally turn to evil (no matter how righteous the cause). Indeed Jesus himself did not try to find the support of the crowds, but rather mistrusted it. John footnotes this at the end of chapter 2 - When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

What a contrast to this morning's Gospel. Jesus appeared to one woman. And his continued appearances were to individuals or small groups. Could he not have gone to the Temple Steps and there condemn those who denied his Deity? Would this have not made it easier for those who followed?

But the heart of the mob can be fickle? Those who recognised him as King on Palm Sunday were turned to condemn him not a week later.

Even now the mob tries to deny things like the holocaust and tapping into anger in the human heart is the greatest weapon to promote evil. And the decisions of the mob are made by the emotions and are not thought out. Perhaps this is the greatest danger in our political system, as it leaves us vulnerable to these things.

This resurrection of Christ that we celebrate today is not something that can be subjected to majority decision. Perhaps at no time in human history has it been the belief that is held by the majority, but this is not what it is about. It is not something that is to be popularised. Looking for popularity and favour is the mistake that many churches make, and we lose sight of the fact that ours is an individual faith. As Jesus engaged Mary in the Garden, so each of us need to meet with him, and to discover the eternal truth - Death is not the ultimate victor - Jesus is. It is not so much that we love him (as our individualistic society emphasises), but that we know that he loved us.

This is the simplicity of Peter's message to the Gentiles "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ —he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter could say this because he had encountered the risen Lord. Mary could tell others because she had encountered the risen Lord. Thomas doubted until he encountered the Risen Lord. Paul was changed when he was confronted by the risen Lord. The list goes on...

But what about you? What about me? Have we made that journey to the empty tomb? Have we seen and believed?

Faith is our individual response. We can no just rely on the faith of our parents, our friends, our partners or our community. Easter says come meet the risen one, see and believe and in doing so receive the gift of life.

As we gather today and celebrate the resurrection, let us take time to ask, has it made a difference to me and if not, why not?

Christ is Risen

He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

AMEN