



Peter 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

John 20: 19-31

When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Reflection

We should be encouraged because Jesus knows that belief is not easy. However we do not believe without reward, as we trust in the risen Christ, so we are blessed, - belief has its rewards.

Perhaps one of the lessons which we as a church need to receive, concerns how the early Christians treated those who found belief difficult. Struggling with doubt was not a reason to be thrown out.

When Jesus appeared, Thomas was with the disciples behind locked doors. He had not been thrown out of the church because he wavered. The early Christians were confident enough in what they believed that they were not threatened by those whose faith was weak and uncertain.

The church today must equally embrace those who have doubts and difficulties with their faith. There may be many reasons why we find faith hard at different times of life. Sometimes it is personal tragedy, although more often Christians find their faith to be even more assured in times of difficulty. Whatever the cause, a strong church must welcome within it those who seek the presence of the risen Lord.

Of course those who do find themselves searching for truth with a weak faith must recognise that they are not unique or special. The church has always provided shelter from the storm to those who struggled with their belief. No individual has all the answers and that is why we belong to a community of faith, we share in our faith and sometimes we have to accept the testimony of others and assert it for ourselves. It is as we do this that we meet with the risen Christ and find his presence among us. *Charles Royden*

Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead

Lord, make my life a window for Your light to shine through and a mirror to reflect Your love to all I meet. Amen.

Risen Lord Jesus, you come to us in the most surprising - and the most ordinary - ways. Just when we begin to forget or doubt you, when we begin to live our lives as if you don't matter, you come - speaking to us, feeding us, encouraging us. You never forget us or fail us. Without you we are weak and fail often but with you we are strong. May we be made deeply aware of your presence this day.