



Ian Pruden

Hello,

There's rather a lot of my stuff about this week.

The worship at home on the Circuit you tube channel and the written service delivered to folk is using the Easter Offering material thinking about going out into all the world. For Allhallowgate folk, Harold has attached my sermon for that service for you with the notices.

Please find below my reflection for this week, thinking about restoration after trauma.

There are two services with me on Sunday via Zoom, 10.30am and 7pm, all welcome. In the morning we will be thinking about how God reaches out for us, and in the evening how God completes his work in us. Different material at each! Of course, Bishop Monkton have their own service on Sunday with Deacon Nigel.

Have a good bank holiday weekend.

Ian

Rev Ian Pruden

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Passage for reflection: John 21: 1 - 14

Do you remember Donald Rumsfeld, George W Bush's defence secretary in the Iraq war. He made this statement in a now infamous press conference: "As we know there are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know."

Have you ever had the experience of life being so difficult you just don't know what you know anymore, when what you believed is suddenly swept away? There

are times when what we took for granted is abruptly no more. It can be through health or sudden unemployment or the actions of others destroying our hope.

That's where the disciples are where we join them in John 21. With the Jesus project over, they are demoralised and directionless, they go back to the only thing they can do: get their fishing boat out.

This is the third time that Jesus has revealed himself to his disciples. The first time was to Mary Magdalene when she thought he was the gardener. The second time was behind closed doors when he had invited Thomas to touch his wounds. And here Jesus reveals himself again to the disciples, this time by the Sea of Tiberias, which is another name for Lake Galilee. It's quite significant that the disciples were fishing on Lake Galilee because it shows us that, since the crucifixion and even since the appearance of Christ to them the last time, the disciples had given up hope completely and gone home, gone back to their previous lives and jobs. Lake Galilee was 80 miles from Jerusalem where Jesus had last appeared to them. The disciples had travelled 80 miles home in between appearances. That was no short distance in those days, so they really had given up and gone home - they were not hanging around Jerusalem wondering what was coming next...

The disciples, in their desolation, had dispersed too. They aren't all together here - there are only 7 of them. Perhaps the others had given up completely. The group had disbanded. And so, when Jesus appears to his disciples, he is appearing to broken and vulnerable men who had no sense of hope for the future. Disciples, like us, desperately in need of a fresh start with God, desperately in need of finding value and worth and a sense of identity, to know that they are loved and that their loves are worth something.

The appearance happens at the crack of dawn. Jesus stands on the beach but the disciples don't recognise him. They are about 100 yards away.

Note how the interaction between them begins; one of the most beautiful interactions in Scripture, a really beautiful conversation that shows the absolute grace of God.

Imagine their despair when they can't now even do that right. Imagine how they feel when this stranger appears on the beach and says "oy, why don't you throw your nets on the other side of the boat." What does he know? We know what happens. At the amazing haul, Peter recognises who this stranger is.

I read these words in a sermon on line this week:

"Easter is our eye-opening, life changing celebration. It is the good news for everyone left weeping in the dark, or suffering from spiritual blindness, or tempted to run away from the unknown mysteries of life. Easter is our saving grace. It is our reminder that God has not given up on us, even if we are tempted to give up on God. Because Jesus Christ is alive, God has freed us to live faithfully, fearlessly and forever. And it's up to us to share this good news. God is redeeming the world. The whole point of Easter is about life! And living it in full glory of God whose power cannot be contained any more than death could keep Jesus

captive. We proclaim Jesus is alive. He has risen indeed. And because he lives we can see tomorrow.”

God’s work of putting us back together often begins when we are at our lowest when we think it is all over. The God we worship is a God of transformation. The full stop to a story divinely comes a lot longer after we have given up. Jean Vanier, founder of the L Arche Community in France once wrote that “ sometimes God waits until we have exhausted our human resources before he answers our call.” He makes a way out of no way, he turns our mourning into dancing if we hold on.