

12 April 2015 Easter 2B

[Easter 2B Textweek](#)

Acts 4:32-37

Psalm 133

1 John 1:1-2:

John 20:19-31

Peter Humphris

With the narrative of Easter still echoing we have an opportunity to contemplate, and to encounter, life lived in the resurrection.

The Easter story gives us a new world view; not a renewal of what was, nor a bringing back to life things that are dead; rather, it reveals a life lived within the timescape of eternity.

As we seek to understand the new reality that 'resurrection' offers us; so too we might seek to reflect our understanding both in our liturgy and in our living.

Today's readings give us some glimpses to contemplate, to help us appreciate this new understanding of life.

The first reading from Acts presents us with a picture of a post-Easter community;

a community "*of one heart and soul*"

a community where "*no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common*"

a community where "*there was not a needy person among them*"

a community in which "*great grace was upon them all.*"

Perhaps such a utopia is hard to imagine, perhaps you don't believe that such a possibility could actually happen; but we should remember what it was like for those who knew the earth was flat, they also could not imagine a different worldview. More recently, in 1943 Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM spoke of his understanding of the emerging worldview offered by computers; he said "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." So we're not alone when it comes to imagining a very different worldview to the one we currently hold.

The second reading from 1 John encourages us to open our minds and to imagine the possibility of other realities. John contrasts the different realities of heaven and earth,

light and dark, and love and sin; and in John's understanding, Jesus reveals the possibility of a reality that is heaven, light and love.

This is a crucial key to our own attempt to grasp the reality of resurrection, we need to appreciate that Jesus **reveals!**

The Easter narrative is not about Jesus, rather it is a narrative of what Jesus reveals for us.

The events of Easter are not a 'happening to' Jesus, the gospels are not a biographical documentary; rather they are illustrative of a new understanding that Christ reveals.

And with that distinction, together with John's encouragement, we might look at the gospel with new eyes; and to help us 'look again', to help us look beyond the routine understanding, we might picture ourselves walking from the tomb of orthodoxy, walking from the tomb of tradition and walking into a new Eden.

The gospel today opens with *"it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews"*; the disciples had seen, glimpsed, the new Eden but they stayed locked in the tomb of tradition, *"for fear of the Jews"*.

Remember this is not events being described but rather we are being given an illustration for ourselves to consider.

Perhaps the church is reflected in this opening scene; the meeting place of the disciples, the followers of Christ, behind locked doors held in fear by the tradition, a fear that keeps them from walking into the unknown possibility of the new Eden.

Next we have Jesus standing among them, they are given another vision of resurrection; and what follows is John's version of Pentecost:

"he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.""

Then, just as we're contemplating what it means to see resurrection we are introduced to Thomas; but not the 'doubting Thomas' we were introduced to years ago; as we look with new eyes, we need to ask again who is this Thomas in John's gospel and what does he illustrate for us.

I've been looking at Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper"; it is one of the world's most famous paintings, and one of the most studied, scrutinized, and satirized.

You'll know the picture, Jesus sitting with all of the disciples.... out of all of the disciples who does Leonardo paint closest to Jesus?

Thomas!

The painting is full of theological references and I wonder what Leonardo was expressing in his depiction of Thomas.

He is the one closest to Jesus, and directly faces him; as if Jesus sets his face to Jerusalem and Thomas sets his face to Jesus.

All the other disciples have their upper bodies visible, but with Thomas we see only his head and his hand; and his hand has a raised finger pointing directly upwards, toward heaven.

When we come back to the gospel text, we can appreciate that Thomas never doubted Jesus, rather he doubts the disciples.

According to the narrative Thomas was not there locked in the fear filled room, what does that suggest?

The disciples have not done anything in the light of the resurrection, they are locked in fear. Thomas was not with them, had he already begun a new life in the light of the resurrection that had been revealed?

Is his doubt of the disciples a reaction of disbelief, how could you have seen the resurrection and not been changed, how can you do nothing?

The reading today illuminates John's purpose in writing the gospel;

"But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

You may have life in his name; you have an invitation and an opportunity to live in the resurrection.

Finish with a short 'after Easter' meditation by Michael Benedict, author of "God is the Good We Do."

Commencing a series of 'After Easter' meditations by Michael Benedikt... Jewish by birth.

"Whether or not God exists"

Michael Benedikt. **God is the Good We Do. Theology of Theopraxy/3.**

Whether or not God exists
is entirely up to us.
For God comes into being by what we do
and do not do.
Neither you nor I are God
but what we're doing may be.
This God, who lives as deeds not creeds,
is the God we know firsthand.
This God, whose shape is action not image,
is the God we witness every day.
This God's presence is not guaranteed.
"God is good and God does good" the Talmud says,
and Augustine said too,
"God is what God does" we might add – or
God does what God is,
which is good.
Goodness-of-deed is less God manifest
than God instanced.

God is in our hands,
and we in "his" as we choose the good
and do it.
Do good again and again,
and you "do God's will."
"Do God's will,"
and you bring God into being.