

Easter 3: Reflections for St Mary's & St Augustine's

Sunday's Readings: Acts 2.14a, 36-41; Zephaniah 3.14-end; Luke 24.13-35

Wednesday's Readings: Psalm 72; Ephesians 2.1-10.

**"... Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him."
(Luke 24.15/16)**

The restrictions of lockdown mean that I have had simply more time to sit. Sometimes I have to admit this is sitting of the sofa and following up the latest series on i-player. I am grateful there are so many boxsets to choose from! But the sitting has also led me to a deeper reflection, often sitting in my garden and noting the daily changes as the leaves unfurl. Changes I have not noticed in previous years as life has been too busy just to sit and literally watch the grass grow. The flower that has struck my attention is the dandelion, weeds I hear you say ... what is a weed but a flower in the wrong place! Previously I would have gone about pulling them up dowsing them in weed killer but this year their yellow brightness is the joy I need, the joy of this Easter Season. The yellow joy turns in time to a dandelion clock ... they seem to be everywhere at the moment, in the cracks in the paving slabs amongst the flowers in our garden. The dandelion clock is so fragile and vulnerable but also beautiful and intricate. As the wind blows it appears that everything that she is is lost, the fragility of life simply being carried on the wind. But those seeds now will be spreading an abundance of life ... of fresh hope and new bright yellow flowers that will appear in their season and so begin the whole cycle of life again.

For me, the dandelion clock mirrors something of our collective experience of loss during this season. When all our normal activities that give life have ceased and we are reminded very starkly of the fragility of life. Whilst being in our Easter Season as a Church community we find ourselves and our communities living out of an extended Holy Saturday. An in between space after the death but before the festival of joy and new life becomes real and apparent.

*We don't know God's heart
But we know
Something that pours over us
Like rain over our hands.*

*We don't see Her eyes
But we see
Invisible light over everything
As on a summer night.*

*We don't hear Her voice
But we find
Roads everywhere and signs in
our hearts
And paths of hushed light.*

Rolf Jacobsen

If we draw ourselves back into the readings for this Sunday. We find ourselves with two of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. We are still on the day of the resurrection yet reality of what this truly means still remains hidden ... "Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Luke 24.15). The experience of the first Easter was not sure and joyous but confusing, fragile, and vulnerable. The disciples (the men and women who had walked lived and witnessed both his life, death and resurrection) would be in a state of collective trauma ... "They stood still. Looking sad ... We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel!" (Luke 24.17&21). All that they had hoped in had gone and they could not yet recognise the risen Christ in their midst.

Jesus had come near them, but it was not the Jesus that they had known. When the Israelites were wondering through the wilderness God provided for them food ... manna, strange bread which they had not tasted or even seen before to sustain them on their journey. During this time particularly when we are in lockdown, we will find that Jesus is near, and that God will provide for us. But there will be a strangeness to this, the ways we had before of being church, sharing food together, breaking bread all have finished now for this season and for a time to come. We are leaning to be church very differently from what we have ever known or experienced before but perhaps too we are strangely more real and connected, more vulnerable, more hope filled, learning what it is to be a disciple as those first disciples also had to learn what it meant. I hope too we are maybe finding a deeper wisdom and truth, that we are deepening our spiritual roots, learning to pray, daring to pray, pondering what the true purpose of church and community is all about.

As the creation was how God first revealed herself to us we should not be surprised that it is nature who teaches us. The prophet Zephaniah encourages us that the Lord our God is in our midst's rejoicing over us with loud singing and renewing us in his love (3.17). The Easter joy is present now in the yellow heart of the dandelion. Like the dandelion clock as we begin to recognise our own vulnerability and fragility and also the frailness and vulnerability of our churches, when everything is apparently lost and stripped back ...then the seeds of new life will give way to an abundance of joy and fresh hope.

Collect for this Sunday

Risen Christ,
You filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
Strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
And fill us with your peace,
To the glory of God the Father.

**Jem Clines will offer a zoom service on
Sunday morning at 11am - the meeting link is
<https://zoom.us/j/95585710442> Or join via telephone,
—you'll need to type in the meeting ID, which is: 955 8571 0442,
once you've dialled one of these numbers below:
0208 080 6592; 0330 088 5830; 0131 460 1196; 0203 481 5237;
0203 481 5240; 0208 080 6591.**

Roots resources are providing free prayers and reflections for adults, families and children for each Sunday - we often use these with Light Factory – adult and Light Factory Activity Sheets and colouring page can be accessed via this link
<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/easter-2/worshipathome>

For the Christian Community

We are not people of fear:
We are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
We are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed:
We are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
Giving and loving,
Wherever we are,
Whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
Wherever you call

Barbara Glasson
President of the Methodist Conference

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