

2021-04-11 ... FTW 10am Service Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt
John 20 v19 – 31

'Locked doors'

Prayer

Well, what a day!

And not just a day ... what a week the early followers of Jesus had been through ...

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the arrest, trial and killing of Jesus. They would have been exhausted and traumatised. All that they had given up ... why had they bothered? All that they had hoped for ... destroyed.

And then a depth of fear pervading everything ... would they be next .. would the Jewish leaders incite the soldiers to come for them? Would their families be targeted?

Amidst all of this – the story of Mary Magdalene that Jesus had risen from the dead – what were they to make of that? And even if they believed her – what difference did it make?

Not all had stuck together ... those we don't hear about had perhaps left and gone to their previous homes to resume an old way of life.

But for those who were together, together in one place ... the doors were locked for the people inside were too traumatised to face the past, they were shaken and fearful in the present and the future seemed empty

They were in lockdown.

Until – that is – Jesus stood among them. He entered not only the 'prison' of the locked room but also the 'prison' of their fear, their grief, their hopelessness and their doubt.

And Jesus did so gently ... and with a gift:

He said "**Peace be with you**"

And he breathed on them to impart to them the Holy Spirit.

The peace that Jesus gives is not merely absence of conflict ... it is transformative. It welcomes back the lost and heals the broken hearted. It offers forgiveness ...

And just as in Genesis, God's breath is depicted as creating life in man and **PTO**

woman, so Jesus' breathing on them the Holy Spirit re-creates them ... unlocks the prison of fear, guilt, inadequacy and hopelessness and means that Jesus can send them out to continue his Father's work ... they are given the inner strength, courage and hope to unlock the door of the room.

We too have been in lockdown – though in very different circumstances. Yet I do believe God has things to teach us, to remind us of through this passage.

As we move forward into the rest of this year and beyond ...

Maybe some are assuming that they can return to life as it was before, and that may seem very attractive if life felt good before, but Jesus sends us out with new perspectives, new insights, new power ...

Maybe some feel very fearful

perhaps because of potential infections still ...

perhaps because they've become used to a socially distanced life and feel safer emotionally ...

perhaps because of exhaustion from the past year ...

perhaps because of fears about income in the future ...

perhaps because grief is still strong about the loss of loved ones ...

However we are feeling; however we are regarding the future ... **Jesus wants to stand among us and beside us.** He doesn't want us to return to how things were before ... but to learn from what we've been through, and to love and to act for the common good ... to build on things we've been doing during lockdown as well as what was there before.

He wants to give us his peace – his shalom ... his well-being, and he wants to breathe on us his Holy Spirit to impart forgiveness, restoration, to give us courage and strength and healing ... so that we can go out from lockdown empowered by him!

So, will you, will I pause to listen to Jesus and to receive from him?

Not everything will happen all at once ... after all – the disciples had another 40 days until they went out publically to proclaim the message of Jesus' resurrection. We too have more weeks of some restrictions even if all goes smoothly.

But as we recognise and respond to the presence of the risen Christ in our lives and in our midst – whether gathered for worship or going about our daily lives – His presence is transformative and locked doors can be opened.

Alleluia; Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed; Alleluia!**