

Proof and purpose

19 4 15

Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,
that we may be strengthened and sustained
by his risen life;
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Luke 24 and part of verse 41:

'Have you anything to eat?'

If the risen Lord Jesus himself were to appear to you today and ask you for something to eat, then I wonder what you'd give him? I'm English so I guess a biscuit or a piece of cake and, of course, a cup of tea. But here, what do the disciples have to hand? A piece – presumably cold (?) – of broiled fish. 'Broiled' – to cook fish by grilling over a direct heat just as Jesus once did with the freshly caught fish over a charcoal fire for the seven disciples on the shore of the Sea Galilee that morning he forgave Peter for denying him three times.

The post resurrection appearances that we have recorded in the Bible are not numerous but each one is interesting in what it has to tell us. Here, towards the end of Luke's gospel, let me focus on two strands: proof and purpose.

Proof. Proof that Jesus is alive. Proof that Jesus is risen from the dead. Proof of the fact of the Resurrection.

Jesus appears out of nowhere. The disciples are understandably **'startled'**, **'terrified'** – they **'thought they were seeing a ghost'**. So how does Jesus calm them down ? He speaks to them. His tone is friendly, reassuring; his voice familiar. He asks the right questions: **'Why are you frightened ? . . . Why do doubts arise in your hearts ?'** And then, he offers them proof: look and see; touch and feel. He shows them his hands and his feet – the marks of the nails imprinted in his flesh. He invites them to reach out and to touch him – he is flesh and blood, warm and solid. Touch me; feel me; see that I am truly alive. Then, as a final proof he is no ghost, no mirage, no product of their fevered imaginations, he asks them, **'Have you anything to eat ?'** Now, surely to the doubting mind this is proof beyond question that Jesus is real, is there in the flesh, because no ghost can eat, no ghost can chew and swallow solid food.

So we have proof that Jesus is alive and truly risen from the dead. But what of the purpose for so doing?

Jesus tells them that he has risen to fulfil everything that is written in the Law the Prophets and the Psalms: put simply that the Messiah should suffer, die and rise again from the dead and that they the disciples are to be witnesses to this truth. Luke focuses on just two key things that the disciples need to tell other people: **'repentance and the forgiveness of sins'** – two sides of the same coin.

In a nutshell, repentance is saying sorry: regretting where we have gone wrong, admitting where we have fallen short. Repentance is a recognition of having screwed up and of being unhappy that we have failed to be what we ought to be, that we have failed to do what we ought to do.

In a nutshell, forgiveness of sins is saying it's okay. It's accepting the fact of failure but most importantly it's accepting us back home because love excuses what we have done wrong, love cancels our debts. It is the image of the father hugging the prodigal son, enfolding his boy in his arms, a picture that embodies the loving forgiveness our Father has for us, his wayward sons and daughters.

So today, the Third Sunday of Easter, let us simply remember these two things: resurrection is a fact of our faith and in fact we can say sorry and be forgiven.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 31 : Proof and purpose

