

I love you, Lord

30 4 17

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 this morning may be found in today's psalm – Psalm 116, verse 1:

'I love the Lord'

Today, April 30th, is the third Sunday of Easter. On Easter Day, we heard Matthew's account of how Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, outside the empty tomb. Last week, we heard how he appeared to Thomas in the Upper Room. This week, we have just heard how he appeared to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus.

Each post resurrection appearance of Jesus to his friends, to those who loved him, are signs that death is not the end, that there is life after death, and that Jesus is with us always – though sometimes we may not know it. Well, Cleopas and his unnamed friend are on their way home from Jerusalem, still upset by the shock of Jesus' execution when they are joined on the walk to Emmaus by a stranger. They

fall into conversation and Cleopas is surprised that the stranger seems unaware of what's just happened in Jerusalem just a couple of days ago. But the stranger is theologically literate and explains why, according to the scriptures, Jesus' death was necessary in order to fulfil God's plan for his people. They get to Emmaus and it's getting late in the day so Cleopas invites the stranger to break his journey by staying overnight at his home and eating with them. Typical of middle Eastern hospitality. And when they sit down to eat and Jesus takes the bread and blesses it, they realise just who the stranger is. But the moment their eyes are opened, Jesus disappears. So without staying to eat, they rush back to Jerusalem to share the good news with other disciples who tell them that they too have seen the Jesus.

I love it. A exciting story of surprise, of joy, of good coming from evil. But the phrase that caught my attention was how they described what they felt when Jesus had been explaining scripture to them – **'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road'**. The excitement of understanding is one of the gifts as a teacher I could share with my pupils.

But, this morning, I'd just like us to reflect on the opening of Psalm 116 and a verse that leapt off the page as I read it – **'I love the Lord'**. Love is the distinguishing badge of a Christian. Little Skyla, whom I'm going to baptise this morning, clearly loves her mummy and daddy and Giselle and André clearly love her too. But if we are being encouraged to love God, I'd like to ask two simple questions this morning – why and how? Why should we love God our Father and how best can we love him?

So why should we love him ? Simply because he is there for us. The psalmist clearly says that God hears us, that he inclines his ear to us and that he has heard the voice of our supplication. God has given us life in the first place, shows us how best to live that life and in the end, when we die, he will welcome us home.

So given we ought to love him, how best can we do so ? Oddly enough, Skyla is a great example of what we can all do – she’s loved by her mum and dad and I’m sure she loves them and will love them in return. But one of the ways that Skyla can show her appreciation of being loved by André and Giselle is later in life by how she loves her own children. And that is the secret of how best to love God – by reflecting his love to others: to our neighbours, to strangers, to ourselves. Jesus taught us as much and we owe him so much and by loving others as we love ourselves, we are truly loving God.

A great thought on which to reflect this morning as we baptise a five-month-old child – that we are all children of God our Father who loves us and that we should mirror that love in our daily lives. Can you ?

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

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew’s, Dinard

30th April 2017

G: Sermons 35 :I love you, Lord

