

A matter of trust

8 4 18

Almighty Father,
you have given your only Son to die for our sins
and to rise again for our justification:
grant us so to put aside the leaven of malice and wickedness
that we may always serve you
in pureness of living and truth.

Easter: Jesus has risen from the dead. And today, Low Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter, I'd like to ask the question, 'Why do we believe the truth, the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his promise to us that one day we, too, will rise from the dead and enjoy the life of the world to come?'

And the key is our text today from Psalm 56 v4:

'In God have I put my trust.' (AV)

The third and last school in which I taught was Dame Alice Owen's School, founded in Islington in 1613 and which moved out to Potters Bar in 1973. The Trustees of the School are the Worshipful Company of Brewers of the City of London whose motto, 'In God is all our trust', was adopted by the School. It's good to think that these good folk, responsible for brewing good English ale, good British beer, were God-fearing folk who trusted that what they brewed would, God-willing, be good to drink. And interestingly, the U.S.A. has a similar motto, 'In God we trust'.

So the ability to trust in God is essentially the reason why those first disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. Unlike most of us, they were lucky to have first-hand evidence of what had occurred: the fact of the empty tomb; the words of Mary Magdalene who, after Jesus' resurrection, had seen, touched and spoken with Jesus in the garden outside his tomb; breakfast cooked by Jesus for seven of the disciples who had just spent an unsuccessful night fishing on the Sea of Galilee; the meeting on the road to Emmaus when Cleopas and his companion had seen Jesus bless and break the bread at the start of their supper together.

And, not least, today's gospel passage: that first Easter Sunday night in the Upper Room. 'The doors to the house were locked for fear of the Jews' but still Jesus came and stood among them. He spoke to them and showed them the marks of the nails in his hands and the spear wound in his side. Then, he commissions them to go out and to spread the good news.

Sadly, Thomas was not, for whatever reason, present and he demanded personal proof that what was being so enthusiastically shared with him as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth was, in fact, true. So he set his own criteria for belief: to see and to touch for himself the wounds of Christ on the cross. And a week later, he got what he asked for and he, too, believed – doubting Thomas no longer.

And Jesus words to Thomas have such weight for us today: 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

And so we are back to us. Why do we believe ? Because we trust what we believe is true. For each one of us, as individuals, what is truly persuasive may vary from person to person. For me, it's because I believe what I was taught as a boy in school and what I heard so often as an adult in church which is summarised in the creed we say each Sunday: 'I believe . . . in the resurrection from the dead and the life of the world to come.' I believe because that belief fits in with the whole of our Christian faith, essentially a belief in a God in whom we trust and who loves us and whose love for us means we are always remembered by him and that, one day, will be with him in paradise, in heaven.

May that be true for all of us here in St Bart's today.

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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