

**Sermon: 18 April 2021; Easter 3; What's for lunch?** Acts 3: 12-19; 1 Jn 3:1-7; Luke 24: 36b-48

***May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be now and always acceptable unto You, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.***

*What's for lunch?* Today's gospel highlights one of the most difficult aspects of faith to get our heads around ... *Jesus was resurrected with a fully physical body!*

How do we know? *Ideas* don't get hungry, and *ethereal beings* don't need to eat ... but Jesus took time to eat some broiled fish and bread with His disciples before He opened their minds and revealed the scriptures to them!

In asking this question, we accept *both* that Jesus' new body simply passed through a locked solid door *and* that He sat down to lunch with His disciples and ate some fish and bread.

The answer here lies in the fact that we are more than our physical bodies. We are more than our physical needs; more than our physical possessions; more than the sum of our parts; more even than the collective history of suffering in our age. We are also *spiritual people*, children of God, joint heirs with Christ ... and Jesus is (at times) a wholly physical person who has been freed up from the constraints of time and space. He has overcome death, and therefore everything He told His disciples, everything He told us through the prophets is true!

To be fair ... this wasn't immediately obvious to His disciples on that day either; He had to *open their minds to understand the Scriptures* (v. 45) and He continues to do that with us by *progressive revelation*; the truth of scripture is revealed little by little, as we are ready to receive it.

To enable this to happen, we too need regular reminders ... because we are human; we forget, we hear new ideas, and we come to doubt, we sin... we turn away from God occasionally. We need encouragement and

reassurance ... because our doubts and fears seem real.

We need to challenge our existing understanding of concepts such as *justice* and *peace* (perhaps even *time and space*) and imagine new ones ... except that they aren't new ... God gives us better, more complete definitions of these ideas that keep Him and His kingdom before us ... rather than drawing shallow comparisons based only on our human experience.

One of my heroes is ABp Desmond Tutu. His influence ensured that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa was built on a strong biblical ethic. In order that people could bring their complaints before the Commission they had to surrender their right to seek legal compensation through the Courts. Instead, Tutu required them to seek a biblical sense of *justice* rather than a legal one. Those who came to tell their stories did so with passion and pain, but they came because easing that pain was more important than punishing their fellow citizens.

Those who came to answer for their actions did so knowing that they wouldn't face judicial penalties ... instead they had to face their victims who had experienced the devastating consequences of their bad behaviour. When I first came to this question, I hadn't realised that many of the worst perpetrators were black people ... policemen and terrorists who got carried away in the moment, or who perhaps believed they would never have to face trial. They stood and heard the cries of their own people. Tutu recalls many times that he and other Commissioners had to take a break in proceedings because of the heartache they had difficulty laying down. Victims came in their droves to air their grievances and lay

them at the feet of those accountable ... with no possibility of seeking compensation.

It was an extraordinary act of generosity and forgiveness by both parties. It required a whole new way of listening and feeling ... of being human ... and a complete reimagining of the whole idea of *justice*.

I am not naïve in thinking that this process always delivered a better result, but I'm in no doubt that this process was foundational in the creation of the Rainbow nation as we see it today. The peace we see now is *not yet* God's peace ... but it's a lot closer than it was before ... it is perhaps still a work in progress.

Therefore, all is not lost in our current world. In this last year we have seen international science and medical teams, including commercial companies, work together to deliver amazing responses to COVID viral infection crisis in record time. I therefore still have hope that *we can change* our thinking and our methodologies when we need to ... we can open our hearts and minds to the needs of others, given good leadership and an abiding reason to do so.

There has for instance, been some recognition of the need to vaccinate those who live in poorer countries, whether or not they can pay ... because it results in an improved outcome for everybody. At last, we seem to understand that we are all in the same waka, and when one end of that waka sinks, we are all in the same trouble. This seems closer to a biblical understanding of *the peace of Christ* than we have seen before. We are still a long way off the truth the way Jesus would have us receive it ... but we are on a journey and we are still moving forward.

We do, however, need to take time to smell the roses and appreciate Him who calls us out of the darkness and into the light. Yes, we are more than our physical bodies; we are more than our human desires and our

material possessions ... *we are spiritual people*, and we need sustenance to keep us going. Even Jesus needed to stop for lunch now and again! **Amen.**