

When I was thinking about what to preach on today, I had thought that this was going to be the day of the annual meeting. I am about to go away for two weeks to continue to refresh and develop our reconciliation networks in Canada, and this was the opportunity to say some important things about our Cathedral life both here in Coventry and in relationship to our international partnerships which might lead us into the important business which would take place in the meeting later on - and which might inspire us to know what God was up to amongst us.

In the event, we have been forced to postpone the annual meeting - as you will have heard, the additional work required of the finance team as a result of the Cathedral moving under the umbrella of the Charity Commission - along with all the other Church of England Cathedrals - proved just too much. But I'd still like to say some of the things I was planning to anyway, and I hope we can recall some of them when we meet on May 5th to look at the accounts.

The first is, that God is at work amongst us. The resurrection changes everything! The readings we have had since Easter are chosen to help us take in the extraordinary truth of what's happened - and in truth, if it was the first time we had heard the gospel accounts, we would still be struggling to take it in. It is such huge information, that someone should rise from the dead, that it makes everything else different. As it is, we might be a little tempted to go - oh yes, we know, Jesus rose again, tell us something new.

So let's try and do what we are always trying to do around this season of the Christian year, which is to engage as if for the first time with the news that Jesus, crucified, was seen again, was a guest at a meal, was called upon to heal people just as he had before his crucifixion. The readings today help us to respond by describing the response of others. In a little while, we will share the Easter greeting at the Peace, which says rather prosaically, "Jesus came and stood amongst his disciples, and said, "Peace be with you". Then they were glad when they saw the Lord." Whoever wrote that piece of CofE liturgy really should have tried harder - or at least taken notice of the Luke story, rather than John's account. In Luke they weren't glad - they are startled and terrified, and thought they had seen a ghost! It took time for them to take it in. And later, when Peter called on Jesus to heal the lame man by the gate into the temple, the people were amazed ... it was hard to take in.

Everything that we do here together is in response to the truth that Jesus died and rose again. Christ is Risen - he is risen indeed, alleluia! The world is now a different place - if people don't stay dead, then we can plan for quite a different sort of future. This is not all there is! What I want to invite you to do today is to invest in that future. To commit everything to the future that God gives, that God makes for all of us to share, rather than the one that you make for yourself.

We do what we do here because we believe that God makes different futures possible, and one of the key characteristics of that future is that God brings us into new and reconciled relationships with God and each other. Resurrection and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin in the Coventry gospel. We know that in our history, and just as the disciples told the world of their experience of resurrection, so we tell the world of our experience of reconciliation, and encourage them to believe that it can be possible for them, too. This is our vocation, to tell the world that God in Christ has reconciled the world to Godself, and has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

The resurrection appearances of Jesus are a particular example of this. Alongside John Paul Lederach, one of my favourite writers on reconciliation is a Roman Catholic priest called Robert Schreier. He has taken each of the resurrection appearances of Jesus and shown how each of them is an example of reconciliation ... as the disciples, who had turned away from Jesus, publicly rejecting him, are brought back into a healed relationship. As Schreier says, "at the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of hope and reconciliation." Not only is a man no longer dead, but a relationship which was dead and buried is now restored to life. "Reconciliation is not our achievement. God is at work in our world turning hopeless and evil situations into good." As we hear of potential escalation in the Middle East, and the BBC is running stories about how Russia may overrun Ukraine, we know that nothing could be more relevant than the message of

resurrection and reconciliation - reconciliation with the hard edge of possibility undergirding it - in our fragile and broken world. In the introduction to a collection of essays on reconciliation as mission, springing from the ultimate promises of Revelation, a colleague says: "The healing of our broken world and humanity, their reconciliation are not only things that are desirable. They are eschatologically assured in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. There is hope ... there is hope, for the christian gospel is a significant contributing force to the quest for justice, peace and reconciliation."

God is at work amongst us, opening doors to this ministry, and to our calling to encourage others. On Tuesday, as I said, I will travel to Canada to ... share with them what God has done here, and what God continues to do through our partners.

So that's the first thing I wanted to say, to believe that God is at work amongst us. The second is about our own commitment. God has committed himself fully to the work he is doing here - and so the next part is up to us. One of the things I love about being a Christian is that it's a partnership - me and God, us and God. God does not leave me to get on with the work on my own, neither does God do everything for me: it's a partnership.

The annual meeting is an opportunity to review both what God has been doing amongst us, and also how we have played our own part. That brings us to money. Years ago - and I have been here a fair few years now - I was told that one of our community members was heard to say, "the Dean's preaching, it will be about money again." I felt chastened by that comment, and I've actually been quite hesitant to preach about money for quite a while. But I think that's a mistake, not just because money is needed to maintain both this place and all that takes place here, and which has such an impact on so many people, but because money is a way for us sometime ourselves to God, for own benefit as well as the ministry.

That came home to me many years ago when my own vocation to ordination crystallised in a sermon which I heard when I was a university student studying law. It was a sermon about tithing, setting aside a tenth of your income as a sign of putting God first in your life. Not as a way of helping the church to pay its bills, though that is an added benefit - but as a way of investing in the most important relationship in your life, the one that will last for all eternity. There are texts in the bible which support the belief that if we put God first, we can trust God for our needs, and I would testify to the truth of that. Giving has sustained my relationship with God though times of doubt and challenge as well as times of joy and celebration - it has anchored my commitment to a solid foundation which I can look back on with gratitude.

For me, that sermon was life changing, but not just because it set me on the path to making my commitment to God real through my finances, but also because it provided the opportunity for me to recognise that if I really wanted to give my life to God for all that God wanted of me, it meant offering to be ordained.

This is a good time to be reflecting on what our commitment to God might mean - as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, his new life breaking through into our world, what will it mean for you to walk with Jesus in this coming year? What will it mean to you to receive all he has to give, and what will it mean to commit to him all you have to give? What will it mean to live into God's reconciliation?

What's your prayer, as we travel through this season of resurrection and reconciliation?

*Now to the one who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. Eph 3. 20,21*