



Parish Mission Statement

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:37-38

Sunday Podcasts of Sunday Morning Services are available on YouTube as are the Parish Podcasts 'A time to speak.'

Quotes

"If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead."

Timothy Keller

Many people use duct tape to fix everything... God used nails



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

There is an age-old heresy that tends to rear its head around this time. It's technical title is Docetism. It states that Jesus only appeared as human, but in reality, he was fully divine and only gave the illusion that he had a body. In other words he was essentially a ghost.

This was the heresy that David Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham in the late 80's and early 90's, was accused of as he claimed that Jesus was raised 'spiritually', not physically, from the dead. And so it was, he said, a mere "conjuring trick with bones", suggesting that the disciples had hidden his body somehow and lied to everyone. So when Jesus was proclaimed to have been raised, it was out of grief and sorrow they convinced themselves that they had seen him. He was not substantial. A kind of ghost or a figment of their imagination. And yet, it was real to them.

Now this clearly contradicts the biblical evidence of Jesus' resurrection appearances where he invites Thomas to put his hand into his wounds (John 20:27) and later shares breakfast with them (John 21:12ff). It also accuses the disciples and the church of lying - and lying consistently and continually. Could they really have sustained such an elaborate lie all the time without someone breaking ranks?

No, Jesus was raised bodily or the resurrection is a lie, Christianity is a lie, worse, Jesus Himself is a liar and not God, and finally we have no hope at all of a future resurrection ourselves.

But the truth is what we proclaim not just at Easter but every Sunday: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come in glory.

Happy Easter/Pasg Hapus everyone,

God bless,

Mark

Resurrection

I came across this story recently and, although I cannot verify if it was true or not, it points to a very important aspect of the story of the resurrection:

A vicar once went on his own for a walking holiday in the Lakes. He befriended a young shepherd lad who asked him to explain the Christian faith to him. The vicar showed him the fingers of his right hand and said, pointing to each finger: "The Lord is **my** shepherd."

As he said this, he emphasized the word *my* and held on to the fourth finger of his right hand. "The important thing," he said "is to be able to say that the Lord is *my* shepherd."

The following summer the vicar went back to the same place. He couldn't find the boy anywhere and was sad. One day he came across a farmhouse and decided to knock on the door for a drink. The owner led him into the kitchen for a cup of tea. As the vicar looked around, his eyes lighted on a photograph on the mantle piece above the kitchen fire. There was the boy! So the vicar asked the woman of the house about him.

"Oh, that was my son," she replied. "He died last winter during a very severe blizzard. In fact they brought his body here into the kitchen and laid it on this very table. It was a horrible moment which will live with me for the rest of my life. One thing was a bit strange though. He was holding on to the fourth finger of his right hand."

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23: 6)

This Newsletter is available on the Parish website:

www.stjameswanssea.org.uk

St. James Sunday Services on YouTube are available here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoNVEa6r8mEr_KnOkSv6qQA/

The vicar's blog can be found here: sonofzebedee.blogspot.com

Talking about Heresy

It's surprising how easily any person can fall into heresy. I remember for years not batting an eyelid when someone would say to me after a bereavement that the body is only a shell and the real person who was living in that body had gone to heaven or the afterlife. To them the body, like a husk or the skin of a caterpillar has no real value. It is the treasure inside that is more important. And I would have, agreed, then. And so when someone decides they want their body cremated then, by this way of thinking, you are only disposing of a discarded shell. Nothing more.

But how wrong that is. Why?

First, God created us. We are his workmanship:

*"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
(Psalm 139:13-14).*

We are lovingly made by God. How we treat our bodies is important. My first curate was from Nigeria. His previous Vicar had to work hard with him when he first came over from Nigeria because he could not accept that people's bodies were being burnt to ashes. He felt it was deeply disrespectful as God made our bodies.

Second, the body is sacred. The ark of the covenant that contained the two tablets with the commandments on, Aaron's Rod and a pot of manna, was considered very holy. As a consequence to even touch it without divine approval was to risk death. (See the story of Uzzah in 2 Samuel 3:6-8).

And Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19 says:

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own"....

If you believe that the consecrated wine is the blood of Christ you don't put it in a beer glass or a coffee mug. You put it in a chalice which is set aside for that specific use and nothing else. God puts His Spirit in a human being, a sacred vessel, therefore the body is important and sacred and should be treated so.

Lastly, when we are resurrected we will not live as disembodied spirits but, like the Risen Christ, we will have a body, something similar to the one we currently have so that, like Christ, we will, in some way be recognisable as Mark, Leighton or Sandra. Here is Paul again (and its worth reading the whole of 1 Corinthians 15 about this):

*"The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."
(1 Corinthians 15:42-44)*

Notice a spiritual *body* not a disembodied spirit. A body which will enable us to live eternally on with God.

The strange thing about all this is that although many or even most families talk about the body of their loved ones as mere husks or containers, their instinct is still to cling on to it, and when it is buried/cremated, that is when their grief seems to be the greatest. Maybe, instinctively, they know that the body is more than a box but something much, much more significant. It IS the person they have lost.

Contact information

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Easter Sunday

Collect

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. Amen.

Readings

Psalm 118: 1 - 2, 14 - 24;
1 Corinthians 15:1 - 11;
John 20:1 - 18

Easter quotes

Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there.

Clarence W. Hall

The devil, darkness, and death may swagger and boast, the pangs of life will sting for a while longer, but don't worry; the forces of evil are breathing their last. Not to worry...He's risen!

Charles R. Swindoll

Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone but in every leaf of springtime.

Martin Luther

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

St. Paul—1 Corinthians 15:3-6

The message of Easter is not that Jesus is alive, it is so much more. The message of Easter is that Jesus has risen!

Julien B. Well