

Sermon preached by Revd Rachel McDougall

St Paul's Canterbury

Easter 5A

Sunday 10th May 2020

Trusting in the Roominess of God

Do not let your hearts be troubled – words that we all need to hear!

Fears surround us on every side – in the journey to the supermarket steering clear of each other, in the things we touch, in the prospect of things opening up.

I fear what I can't see and what opening up society again might mean, let alone the uncertainty of this time.

It is normal to fear when the possibility of death seems nearer to us than before, yet at the same time feeling relief at the bullet we have missed so far here, compared to so many other places.

'Do not let your hearts be troubled believe in God, believe also in me'.

This reading is so often heard at funerals when comfort and reassurance is most needed at the farewell of a loved one.

Jesus himself makes his own farewells, using these words standing at the edge of his own grave.

He speaks to those he loves, making space to speak into their grief and fear.

He says these words whilst his betrayer walks out the door and he has just predicted that Peter will deny him.

At the end of his journey to the cross, he says trust in God, trust in me, there are many dwelling places.

No wonder the disciples flounder about with questions about not knowing the way and wanting him to show them the father.

They do not want this moment, this farewell.

We also are in a time that we do not want, in a time of uncertainty and confusion, where anxiety stalks us and none of us are working at our best. These words reach out to us across the years and live in us now.

These are words I need to be reminded of, and I trust that you do too.

Trust in God, trust in me says Jesus. Hang your hearts on me and we'll get through together.

Trust because the living one is with us and there are many dwelling places.

We often think of this as speaking about eternal life and yet it is speaking about now too.

We read this reading in the season of Easter to be reminded that the living one dwells in us now, makes room in us now and God has space for us.

The word for dwelling place is the same sort of word that is used to mean abide, the God who pitches his tent inside us, who builds the house of love inside us.

This is a roomy God, so trust in the roominess of God, who makes space for us and our world in all its travail. In Jesus God chose to make room, to dwell with us, to be with us, that we might be with God.

As creator, God made space in God's self for the world.

In Jesus God opens wide the door of his love to make space for each of us a refuge, where all our days are in his hands.

In Jesus through the door of death he opened up for us new rooms of life and love.

In the midst of fear that crowds our minds, the still small voice makes room for the spaciousness of love and peace where we have room to move, in trust.

We may not know the way ahead but Christ is ahead of us as the way, the truth, the life, the one who is always before us making room, making new rooms of new life and living.

As God is a roomy God, we are called to make room for others, to speak the reassuring word of trust and hope.

This is what it means to be living stones, built up in a spiritual house.

We are firmly set on the foundation of Christ who is our life and dwells in us as we dwell in the spacious tents of God's love; that has firm solid foundations of care and grace.

This can be offered in so many ways and is already around us to notice and join in with.

One of the things I've been enjoying as I take my walk around the neighbourhood is walking past peoples' homes to see teddy bears peeping out of windows, climbing the window frames, gambolling on window sills.

Placed there originally I suppose for the delight of children, to give joy to them as they walk by, yet treasured also by the inner child in me.

It is a gesture of love and care that reaches out and says, it will be okay, there is room for love and joy and life.

So our house has followed suit and there is a large bear and a monastery bear in our house and as you can see - hospital bear here.

Trust in God, trust also in me says Jesus. Trust in the roominess of our loving God, make room for his voice of love and care.

Lectio:

1 Peter 2.1-10

Psalm 31. 1-5, 17-18

John 14.1-14

Blessing with Many Rooms

As you step inside
this blessing
we wish to tell you
it is large enough
for you to lie down in.

Or
(though it may not look it,
small as it is upon this page)
you can curl up
in this blessing
with a cup of tea
and a good book
beside the window—
here, just behind you—
that faces east.

Likewise it is true,
though you might not have
paused long enough
to notice,
that this blessing
is big enough
for a table—
quite a sizable one
can be accommodated—
where your guests
will want to linger
far into the night.

And if they desire to stay,
you will find that
through this door—
you did not see it before?—
there are rooms in plenty
where they can
lay their heads
and stretch out with abandon
in their dreaming sleep.

One room,
many rooms—
in this blessing
it is all the same.
The point is that
there is space
enough.

Enough to make
a life, a home;
enough to make
a world.

Enough to make
your way toward
the One who has made
this way for you.

—Jan Richardson