

Easter 2, 2022

Poor Thomas, we do him so much injustice - 'doubting Thomas' we say, scathingly. But read the Gospel account of what happened on that day, the day he was missing from the group. Mark tells us that Mary Magdalene met Jesus; she went and told those who had been with him that he was alive, and they would not believe her. Mark then tells us that Jesus appeared to two disciples walking into the country - they went back and told the others - but they wouldn't believe them either. Luke tells us that two men in dazzling white appeared to the women at the tomb, and reminded them that Jesus had told them (all of them, not just the women) that he would be raised on the third day - but when the women told the men they thought it 'an idle tale', and wouldn't believe them. The two on the road to Emmaus (in Luke's account) told the stranger they met about the women's story of the vision of angels - but they still couldn't believe. Indeed, in Mark (M16.14) Jesus upbraids the eleven because 'they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen'. So, why do we point the finger at Thomas only, and call him a doubter, as if he was different to the rest of the disciples? Perhaps we point a finger at Thomas to reflect attention away from our own doubts

- and please don't tell me that you have never, ever, doubted! We know the reality of living as Easter people in a cruel world - it can be difficult. The Orthodox Christians of Ukraine will be celebrating Easter today, many in bunkers without food, water or medicines; many in refugee accommodation; many in damaged houses with no mains services; many in fear, anger, grief. Will their 'alleluias' raise the rafters? Yet their President talks of light triumphing over darkness, and worshippers leaving church on Maundy Thursday said - 'This is who we are - this is what we do'. Easter people in a cruel world. Of course we doubt. We look at Thomas the Twin and call him a doubter - but perhaps we are all his twin, from time to time. And yet, Jesus comes to us, as he did to Thomas, not in anger, not in judgement, not to admonish us - Jesus comes in love, in love and with an invitation - 'Do not doubt, but believe'. He comes to us in bread and wine and says - eat and drink - hold out your hands and I will fill them. Just as the disciples in Emmaus knew Jesus in the breaking of the bread, so we can know him here in the breaking of bread - know him, not just know about him - this isn't a Bible Study course where you need to quote chapter and verse to pass the exam., this is a call to commitment in faith (and in doubt) to what we have not seen

and yet believe - Christ is risen - Christ who is and was and is to come is risen - in that we can believe. No wonder we can say with the Psalmist 'Let everything that breathes praise the Lord'.

No matter what is going on in your life - praise the Lord. It is all our Alleluias shaken up like a bag of Scrabble tiles and then tipped out to form this great psalm of praise - there are no petitions, no confessions, no asking for - well, anything - justice, peace, mercy, revenge - just pure praise. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. It is not about us, it is about God. This is the last Psalm in the Book of Psalms - the Book which begins 'Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the Lord. They are like trees planted by streams of water which yield their fruit in due season'.

And surely the fruit of this season - the season of Easter - is praise? Praise him for his mighty acts - and what mightier act is there, can there ever be, than the resurrection of Christ? We cannot be like the frightened disciples, gathered together behind locked doors. We need to fling wide the doors and sing Alleluia, loud and clear - and repeatedly. What a difference between the Psalm and the disciples' misery, disbelief and anxiety. Praise the Lord, again and again and again. Let

everything that has breathe praise the Lord - cry out with Thomas - 'My Lord and my God' - do not doubt but believe. Alleluia. Praise the Lord. Christ is risen - he is risen indeed. Alleluia.