

Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Sunday 28th April 2019

Text: John 21:19ff (1 Peter 1:3)

One of things I love to do is people watching – sitting with a coffee in a café, watching people who go past

The really interesting thing about people watching is what people do and say when they think no-one is watching

At high profile events like a Royal Wedding professional lip reader employed and, when Prince William thought nobody could see or hear, told Kate a joke

When they are on show, people smile, talk, act as they think others expect

When they think no-one is looking you see what they are really thinking and feeling

Last week we were people watching people reacting to the resurrection of Jesus on the first Easter day

We considered what they did with what they had seen and heard – some then told others, while others initially dismissed it as too fantastic to be believed

The story John tells in his Gospel about the dps at the end of the first Easter day echoes these reactions too

The women have already come to tell the dps – Jesus is risen, be joyful; and that the Master has told them to go to Galilee

But what do they do – they stay behind locked doors; and in Jerusalem

Why? Because they don't yet believe Jesus has risen – even though he's told them He will: no, that isn't what happens

But its not just that they are doubting: they are also fearful, focused on what might now happen to them at the hands of the Jewish authorities

We often single out Thomas, giving him the nickname of “doubting Thomas” because he wasn't there, didn't see what they then saw and then questioned it

But really, if Jesus hadn't come to them all, the other dps would have remained the same too – doubting, unbelieving and rather hopeless

But Jesus does come to them – first the ten dps, then a week later to all of them, Thomas too

And as he does, an amazing thing happens

Where there had been death, it is like a new life, a new birth

Where things were hopeless, there is now a living hope

Why? – it is through the experience of Jesus risen from the dead

These dps are among the first to have their expectations turned around, to hear and experience this amazing good news: that Jesus has beaten death

- What had been true is true no more
- Where death had been the end: now Life wins
- What had seemed hopeless can now be hopeful

Jesus told them to pass this news on to others – there is the call to be a witness again, to see, hear and tell

And one of the people there that first Easter, who had experienced this amazing change was Peter

Later on he tried to write it all down, when he wrote to people like you and me, people who never saw Jesus risen but heard the good news passed on by witnesses like Peter and the others.

This is what he wrote in his first letter to churches

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*

I love that word “hope”!

Not will give us new birth into a living hope, but has given us new birth

That’s why it’s a living hope! Something that makes a difference to the way we live our 24/7 everyday lives in the here and now

What feels hopeless to you at the moment?

Maybe in a relationship?
As you look at the world?
Work, school, a huge challenge

But what happens when you start to remember the hope that: Christ is risen

How does that thing start to look as you believe: Christ is risen

Well, says Peter it can look like this: new birth into a living hope

New births are just that: - something small, but significant, small, but growing

And that is the nature of faith and hope too: not that we have everything sorted, no questions, no challenges

It’s taking hold of the promise of life that Jesus offers in situations in life that can seem like death

It’s seeing how that promise grows in our lives

It’s seeing how that then spills over into the lives of those around us as our words, our actions, our hope points them to a different, new life way of living