



SUNDAY 31 MAY 2020
DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pentecost (A): John 20:19-23

We were letting our imaginations run. We'd listened to a lot of passages from St John's Gospel since Easter. We were speculating about what, if we had the chance, we would want to say to John. "You met him, I didn't", one of my mates said. It set the tone for the next hour.

John wanted us to meet the Jesus he knew. He said so - check out the start of the first of John's letters - it's 1 John 1:1-4 towards the back of your Bible.

In his Gospel, John distils for us the Jesus he walked with, listened to, was overwhelmed by and delighted in. He watched him, questioned him, sang and laughed with him. He wanted to share his joy about Jesus with you and me. There were no cameras, no recording devices other than memory, and the greatest gift of all - the Spirit Jesus gave to remind them of so much that was important. With the help of the Spirit, John writes to us.

To my mate who doesn't 'do' subtle, you can't beat the real thing. He wants to be sitting at the table with Jesus, hearing his voice, reading his face, checking him out with friends later, coming to a felt sense of what to make of him. We all swapped impressions of what it would be like in his company and realised he was with us in our conversation. We were doing what the apostles did among themselves. It's what we were meant to be doing. Jesus challenged them to tell him what conclusions they'd come to after they told him what others were saying about him. 'What about you. Who do you say that I am?' (Matthew 16:15)

Our session was years ago. Today when we receive St John's pictures of Jesus coming back to them from the dead, giving them his peace and asking them to forgive in his name, we're being connected to the message given to the eleven apostles - to go out and be the Jesus of today. He overrides our hesitation by giving us his Spirit. We must continue to ask ourselves and one another what Jesus was like so the Spirit can lead us into being like him. In our imaginative pondering, he's very cleverly working in us. When we watch him working with his disciples, he's working with us.

That's if we go with the word pictures St John gives us. If it all goes in one ear and out the other, he'll find other ways to send us out as the Father sent him. Don't underestimate the Spirit's inventiveness - or our sluggishness either. Keep dreaming.

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Imagine St Peter talking about Pentecost by Nick Fawcett

We shouldn't have been surprised,
not if we'd had any sense;
it was what we'd been told to expect,
what he'd promised us.
But we never imagined anything quite so extraordinary.
We were waiting, it's true,
gathered together as so often before,
but we'd been doing that for days
and our confidence had taken a hammering.
We were going through the motions, that's all,
telling each other he hadn't forgotten us,
talking of the future as though we still believed in it,
yet wondering in our hearts if there was anything to look forward to.
I mean, what could we hope to achieve when all was said and done.
What reason to think that we, a motley bunch if ever there was one,
should fare better than our master?
We wanted to carry on his work, don't get me wrong:
we wanted to tell people what had happened,
help them find faith for themselves,
but how could we even hope to begin?
So we kept the doors locked
and sang our hymns
and said our prayers
and hid our doubts.

Until suddenly it happened!
I can't properly describe it even now,
but it changed our lives.
It was as though a mighty wind blew away the cobwebs,
a refreshing breeze revived our flagging faith,
a breath of air stirred our spirits.
As though a tiny spark rekindled our confidence,
a tongue of fire set our hearts aflame,
a raging inferno swept our fears away.
As though life had begun again,
the world become a different place,
and each of us been born anew.
I know that doesn't make sense,
but it's the best I can do.
You'll have to experience it for yourself to understand.
And you can, just as we did.
Believe me, we never would have thought it possible,
despite all Jesus said to us.
We were lost,
lonely,
frightened,
hopelessly aware of our weaknesses,
searching for any strengths.
We never thought we'd change a soul,
let alone the world,
but that's because we had no idea how God could change us!