

Notices for Sunday 19th April 2020
Ponteland Methodist Church
Minister – Rev Jona Sewell (Tel. 822057)
LET THE LOVE OF JESUS BE KNOWN

2nd of Easter // The Gospel of the Spirit

MESSAGE FROM JONA

The reading for this week is **John 20:19-31**, I encourage you to stop and read it now. The reading is about resurrection appearances and includes the story of Jesus appearing to Thomas. When you read or hear of Thomas' story, I wonder how many of us add the word 'doubting' before his name; because that's how he's remembered isn't it? As 'Doubting Thomas'. Is this fair?

I've come to believe that maybe the role of Thomas in this is to represent the reader - both the earliest readers, who John was actually writing for, and every reader since. You see, people don't just rise from the dead and so questioning, doubt and even scepticism seem like very reasonable responses for people who don't have faith, or who don't already believe. I've met people like this, I guess you have too; is Thomas there to represent them? And to represent the doubt and questions that might occur in us? What's interesting to me is that Jesus doesn't scold Thomas for asking questions and doubting, rather he provides an encounter that puts them to rest. John adds that Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." - I believe this is also aimed squarely at the reader, as if to say, 'you might not have a physical encounter like Thomas, but that doesn't mean the resurrection is not real, or that you shouldn't believe!'

Whilst I've thankfully never, myself, doubted the resurrection, I have experienced seasons of deep questioning and doubt in other areas of my faith. I used to feel guilty about this, as if I somehow wasn't a 'good-enough' Christian; I realise now that this is nonsense and that the guilt is usually cultural rather than from God! If you're ever feeling guilt about questions or doubt then ask yourself, what is the source of the guilt? Remember that nothing we think, feel, or ask, can diminish the resurrection or God's power and love!

My experience is that when I hold those questions, struggles and doubts with honesty and integrity before God then, at some point (sometimes after days, sometimes months) I too will have an encounter with the risen Jesus. I might not see him physically, but my deepest self, my inner spirit, will have an encounter with the Holy Spirit that will sometimes answer, usually resolve, but always help the struggles either find resolution or help me find the peace to live with them, seeing them in a new light. Perseverance with struggles has, for me, always led to a deeper understanding, deeper encounters, and opened up new paths to explore with God. Though I usually don't feel it at the time, with hindsight I am thankful for these faith experiences because they've taken me to places and shown me things I would never have discovered otherwise.

It was the doubts, questions and even the scepticism of Thomas that led to his encounter with the risen Jesus. We shouldn't be surprised then that we can encounter Jesus through these things too. If doubt leads to deepening faith, new understandings, and an encounter with the risen Jesus then perhaps we should all strive to be known as 'doubting!'.

In seasons of certainty, and of doubt, may you know the deepest communion and blessing of God!

Doubting Jona.

Prayers

A reminder of the invitation to join me in daily prayer at 1:30pm, or whenever works for you. This week we pray for:

Continual Prayers for:

An outpouring of God's Spirit on the Church, our communities and wider.

Those suffering with Covid-19 and their families and friends

The NHS staff and all who are responding.

Those struggling with loneliness.

Our own church community that we may show Christ in our response to those around us and each other.

Weekly Prayers for:

Doubters and questioners

Those feeling overwhelmed because of the current situation

Farmers and food producers

Our Church stewards

Delivery and public transport drivers

Please don't allow this list to be prescriptive, pray as the Spirit leads

Jona

LECTIONARY

Acts 2 : 14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1 : 3-9, John 20 : 19-31.

The following questions are from the above Lectionary using the NIV version:-

- 1) What other name was Thomas known as? (apart from 'doubting')
- 2) Add the missing words to this verse :- "and into an that can never, spoil or- kept in for you."

You will find the answers on the back page.

VIDEO SERVICES I'm sure you will all agree that Jona, Tim, Juliet and Colin are doing a sterling job producing the services 'online' Tim especially, with his son Ben and Steve Small, must be praised for acting as cameramen and editors ! A reminder that although you are sent a link for each service in an email from Bev, they can be viewed all in one place by going into Youtube and in the search box, type Newcastle West Circuit and you will find them all there. If anyone is interested in a DVD or CD of the services so far that have been videoed, please contact Jona. We are looking at the possibility of providing a cassette version as well for those without DVD players. *Geoff*

ACTION FOR CHILDREN - Emergency Coronavirus Appeal

Action for Children has launched an Emergency Coronavirus Appeal to help provide essentials to the most vulnerable families they support across the UK and those potentially affected in the future. Coronavirus has thrown all our lives, our communities and the UK into an unprecedented crisis. Families who were already struggling are now unable to buy food and basic essentials such as nappies, cleaning products, and money for gas and electricity. They need us now more than ever. Action for Children is working hard to make sure they can still support children and their families at this difficult time. The appeal is just one of many ways they are taking action. They are also creating more digital solutions to support where face-to-face options are limited.

Please donate to this Emergency Coronavirus Appeal and keep the charity in your prayers. A video promoting the Emergency Appeal can be viewed on you tube by clicking on this link www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4iQ2B-4MfU

Action for Children, 10 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DG

NEWCASTLE WEST END FOODBANK - APRIL NEWSLETTER

“These are uncertain times and there is a strong likelihood that all our lives and daily routines will be affected even further by the coronavirus outbreak.”

Despite these circumstances Newcastle West End Foodbank will endeavour to keep our food distribution services operating where practical and safe to do so. The people that use our services will still need food to feed their families and their numbers are likely to increase as the COVID-19 outbreak deepens within our communities and neighbourhoods. Find out more by checking info@westendfoodbank.org

WASH BAGS FOR HOSPITAL PATIENTS Dear friends, we have had a request from Jim Magee, Hospital Chaplain regarding wash bags for patients. He is hoping to receive around 20 for Wansbeck General, The Northumbria Emergency Hospital and North Tyneside General Hospital (Rake Lane). These would be for both male and female patients and would be a small bag/clear plastic bag containing basic toiletries such as:– toothbrush and toothpaste, comb/brush, facecloth, soap and for men disposable razors etc. If you or others could help with this, can you please contact Jim Magee at jim1979jem@gmail.com so that he can make arrangement for the best way for them to be collected or dropped off without anyone having to enter a hospital site and following safe guidelines. Many thanks. *Diane Whitfield District Administrator*

PRAYERS

Grant us, O God, a greater obedience to your will, a more fervent love for our neighbour and a stronger thirst for your word; through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Lord, our response to the gospel has not always been what you would like it to be. Forgive us we pray, and as we rejoice in our own experience of accepting the gospel message, give us a renewed understanding of what the gospel message truly is, an adventurous spirit as we try to share it effectively, courage and love as we engage with those who need to hear and experience it, and the satisfaction of a job well done as more and more people come to know, trust, love and serve you, the source and end of the gospel. *Amen*

O Love most powerful grant us your strength. O Love most sweet let us taste your goodness. O love most faithful let us rejoice in your presence. O Love most victorious persevere with us to the last; for Jesus sake. *Amen*

Protecting God,
when we fall, you quietly pick us up;
when we fear, you gently hold on to us;
when the future looks bleak, you nudge us onwards,
until at last we find ourselves
in the place you would have us be.

**Please send your notices to Geoff Lisle by next Friday, 1pm.
Either by phone:- 01661 822532, by post:- 42, Ridgely Drive. NE20 9BL
or by E-mail :- Geoffandangela@btinternet.com**

Bible Quiz Answers:- 1) Didymus (John 20:24) 2) inheritance, perish, fade, heaven (1 Peter 1:4)