

We're going to now just share in looking at the scripture together, and it's taken from John 20:19-23.

[Reading John 20:19-23]

Just a few moments we going to look at these verses.

Firstly, what kind of body did Jesus have? The risen Christ had a real physical presence. All the gospel writers record that he had hands which still bore the nail prints, and a side where you could see the wound where he had been stabbed.

The disciples were able to touch him, and in these words we've just read Jesus invited them to touch him. Remember those words when Thomas said "I won't believe until I can touch his wounds!" and a week later Jesus appeared, and you can imagine Thomas was at the back of the room sort of edging off, knowing what he'd said, and Jesus said "Thomas, come out here." (Thomas knows what he's said) and Jesus said to him "Touch my hands and my feet; put your hand in my side and believe."

You and I don't get the opportunity to do that; we have to take it on faith. But I believe that Jesus had a physical body that could be touched.

As Jesus had always done, he breathed: he breathed for 33 years and now he was resurrected, he still breathed, and he breathed over the disciples: "Receive the Holy Spirit" and then he blew across them. Ghosts don't do that.

In Luke we're told; in Luke 24 we're told that he particularly said "Bring me some food and he ate it in front of them," and once again he did that to show: ghosts don't do these things, I am here with you in the flesh. He was not a ghost or an apparition. This was not just a spiritual resurrection. Down through the year people have tried to argue: "It wasn't a physical resurrection; he was appearing but it wasn't actually real flesh." I don't accept that - Jesus did all that he could to show that his resurrection was physical.

But it wasn't just physical. It wasn't just a physical resurrection with Jesus having the same body that he'd had for the previous 33 years of his life. This was a different body. Jesus could do things with this body that he didn't do prior to his death and resurrection: he could appear at will in a locked room. We told that the disciples were gathered together in a locked room for fear of the Jews. Jesus simply appears before them. He could also disappear at will: I love the story of the road to Emmaus where those two guys were walking and talking about all that had happened to Jesus. And, you know, "we believed he was a marvellous wonderful man who was going to change our, our nation and our world, and now he's dead."

And they were telling all this to this stranger who they didn't recognise. And then Jesus made to go on when they were going to stop at a tavern, or an inn, and they said to him "No come and join us, stay with us." And it was as Jesus stayed with them, in that inn, and he broke the bread - in that moment they recognised him and then what did Jesus do? Disappeared! I think there's a bit of humour there: as soon as they recognised who Jesus was, he was gone.

"Things are not the same as they used to be," Jesus is saying, "I but I am still here. But not the same as I was."

This was not just a physical resurrection, neither was it a Holy Spiritual resurrection – it was both physical and spiritual. So that's the body: what kind of body did Jesus have?

What kind of faith? What kind of faith did the disciples have? When we were doing our egg earlier on we were looking at the before and after: how the disciples were before Jesus' death and resurrection, and what they were like afterwards. To this group of people huddled together in a locked room for fear the Jewish leaders, Jesus brought peace. Not that sort of peace whereby you stop arguing for 10-minutes while you're eating Easter Sunday lunch, but the real deep peace that is about knowing that what happens in life, Jesus Christ has not changed – he is the person we can still trust.

I've been amazed at some of these stories of people facing death, particularly in countries like Ukraine, where they've spoken about the way they just felt as though “whatever happens God is with me in this situation.”

To a group of people dejected and miserable after the death of their leader and their friend Jesus, he brought joy – he brought joy as we read in our reading, in verse 20. To a group of people demotivated and coming to terms with their dreadful failure: when Jesus needed them the most, when the soldiers came to arrest him Peter and the rest of the disciples had promised “we'll never leave you, we'll be there, we'll protect you”, and what did they they do? They ran off into the night.

And when somebody challenged Peter “You were with him; you've got a Galilean accent, you were definitely there”, “I don't know him, I tell you.” In the moment when Jesus needed him, even Peter denied he knew him.

But as they are coming to terms with their failure, and their cowardice, Jesus brought them new purpose: “As the Father sent me,” said Jesus, “I am sending you.”

You know, that's a great comfort to me because I seem to get things wrong all the while. I'm not going to go into any details now, but none of us are perfect, we make mistakes all the while, but thank God we don't have to be perfect – we have to be willing to be used. And if we're willing to stand for him, however in perfectly we we do so, Jesus can use that.

Jesus brought purpose. In fact in earthly terms, actually we could say that the disciples themselves experienced their own resurrection. They experienced a new life, and a new purpose, a new joy and a new peace in their own lives.

So that's the sort of faith that they had after Jesus' death and resurrection.

What kind of future? What kind of future were they promised?

Well, if we read on into Acts (as we no doubt will do at some point) there was persecution. We know there was: we have accounts of the persecution that happened to Steven and various other people who are followers of Jesus Christ. There were many difficulties lying ahead for them. And actually Jesus never promised anything else; he never said “Become my follower and life will become plain sailing.” Never said it. He did say “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, for I have overcome the world.” Not by power, not by military might, not by having the biggest tanks or the biggest ballistic weapons, but by his self-sacrificing love showing what real power and authority looks like.

I think it's a lovely thing to remember the even Jesus' resurrected body still had the wounds in his hands. And we, in a similar way, we still may bear the wounds of life, the troubles that life brings

our way. But the active presence of the Holy Spirit, that anticipated in the verses where Jesus said "Receive the Holy Spirit" and then breathed over them. These words and the promise of the Holy Spirit would transform their whole lives.

Nothing but the physical and spiritual resurrection of Jesus could for me account for the amazing transformation in the disciples. And that gives me comfort, and gives me hope that I too am being transformed. And I pray for you, that as you trust the Lord Jesus our risen Lord more each day, that you also will experience that transformation that comes as we trust him more.

Amen