

19th April, 2015.

Reading: Luke 1 - 12, 36 - 49

Sermon: Trusting His Words

This is what I told you when I was still with you. Those were Jesus' words to the disciples when He appeared to them on the evening of that first Easter Day. **This is what I told you when I was still with you.**

I couldn't help wondering, as I read those words, if there was a slight frustration in Jesus' voice. Frustration, because what we see in that room, when Jesus appears in it, according to Luke, is a mixture of shock and fear, shock and fear rather than faith.

The disciples have already heard the report of the women that Jesus is risen and have heard from the two on the Emmaus Road of how Jesus walked with them to their home and ate with them. They now have at least two reports that Jesus is risen, that Jesus is alive, and yet still the emotions in that room are shock and fear and disbelief when Jesus appears among them.

On getting that welcome from the disciples, from the people to whom Jesus was closest and whom He had prepared both for His death and resurrection, Jesus response is: **Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your mind? This is what I told you when I was still with you.**

That same sentiment is expressed to the women by the two men outside the tomb whose clothes gleamed like lightning.

Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.

Remember how he told you.... This is what I told you when I was still with you.

This got me thinking about faith, about what faith is and how it impacts on our lives. So what is faith?

The writer of Hebrews says: **Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.** In the Revised Standard Version of the Bible it says: **Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.** If we are sure of something, if we are convinced about something, there is no doubt in our minds.

James, in his letter writes: **You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.** Belief is not faith. Faith is much more than belief. The demons believe in God but do not have faith in God. They do not trust God.

The disciples heard Jesus’ words while He was with them but they did not trust His words. He had told them that He would be crucified and on the third day rise again. but His words did not register. Their meaning did not register.

They believed that when He died, He was gone for good. He was dead and buried and so His appearance terrified them. Mary thought His body had been stolen

when she went to the tomb. They did not trust His words but we know all that. We have heard it all before.

The point is that their doubts left them and they did believe. **I believe** was what Thomas said when he saw Jesus' hands and feet. That belief was about trust. **My Lord and my God**, he said to Jesus. The demons do not believe Jesus is their Lord but Thomas did. He ultimately had faith in the risen Lord. He trusted Him.

What matters today is whether we simply believe Jesus is alive or trust Jesus? What matters is whether we simply hear what God says to us through the pages of Scripture or trust what God says to us through the pages of Scripture.

In preparing His disciples for His death, Jesus said to them: **My peace I give you. Do not let your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.** That peace He has given us. It's ours when we trust Him.

Paul says: **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

In other words, we should take everything to God in prayer, our worries, our anxieties, our struggles, our joys, even our questions and our doubts. We are to lay them before God and, at the same time, give thanks to Him and tell Him what we want. We are to make our requests known to Him, and the peace of God will be ours. There is no point employing a builder to build us a house and then

doing the work ourselves. We have to trust him to do what he says he'll do. There is no point in going to the doctor and then making our own diagnosis. We have to trust his or her skill. There is no point in giving God our worries and then taking them back. The peace of God will enter our hearts and minds and calm us if we lay everything before God and leave it there.

Leaving it there is about trusting God with our lives and with the lives of our loved ones and our friends. Leaving our worries and anxieties with God is about trusting God to care for and to stand by us in whatever situation we find ourselves.

Is it easy? No, not really. It's hard to trust what we cannot see. It's hard to trust when life is crumbling around us. It's hard to trust someone when we don't think they are listening. On the cross, Jesus cried out to God: **Why have you abandoned me?** He felt abandoned because of His pain and His suffering but He still turned to God and told Him how He felt and God was still beside Him and listening.

In what was probably Jesus' final promise to His disciples, He said **I will be with you always, to the end of time.**

We know it doesn't always feel that way. We know, that like Jesus, we are not always aware of God with us? When we are not, do we start to doubt His promise or do we continue to trust through the fog which hides Him from us? Do we continue to trust that He will never let us down?

Someone reminded me the other day about the poem Footprints in the Sand which meant a lot to me when I was in my twenties. I think it sums up beautifully our relationship with God at a time when it seems as if we are abandoned. The author writes:

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord,

“You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?”

The Lord replied, “The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”

It seemed like abandonment at the time, when in fact, we were cradled in the arms of our Lord.

So how does our faith impact on our lives? Do we notice any difference in how we cope with situations? Is there a difference between our stress levels and those of people who have no faith? My peace I give you. Are those just words or do they impact on our day to day living?

Do we take things to God in prayer and leave them there or do we take everything back with us so that we can worry ourselves sick?

If Jesus were standing in front of us today, would he be saying to us as He said to the disciples **This is what I told you when I was still with you.** Do His words not register with us? He spoke to the disciples so that they would have a certain hope. He spoke to them before His death so that they would not despair as those who have no hope. He spoke to them so that they would know that they could trust Him with their lives. He spoke to them so that they knew they could depend on Him and not just believe His teaching but trust His teaching. He left all those words for us so that we would have hope, so that we would know we can trust Him with our lives, so that we would know that we could depend on Jesus and not just believe but trust His teaching.

My prayer for each of us is that we will leave here today trusting the God who gave everything for us so that we can know His peace.