

## **Resurrection – thoughts on transcendent peace**

**7 April 2024**

Josh frequently reminds us that the first message the risen Christ gave to his anxious and fearful followers was to be at peace. Before his death he had taught them that he would leave his peace with them- a peace that was going to be of a different genre – not as the world gives. He was foretelling the deep and comforting peace that would indwell them and be their strength in their lives ahead. So when he appears to them - risen , he immediately gives them the blessing of the peace he had spoken of before. Perhaps we can build on that in our lives to understand that living in the resurrection presence and power of Christ will bring a transforming serenity to us in our circumstances, anchoring us in God’s love that reaches beyond what we are going through, strengthening us.

An understanding of the magnitude of gift and blessing to us of the presence of the risen Christ in our personal lives has to be alongside some level of understanding ( at least doing our best !) of who in all fullness Christ is. The one who is our personal companion is at the same time the one whose existence is cosmic and stands astride every aspect of the entire universe. The risen Christ is the pre-existent Christ of whom the Apostles wrote, the one through whom John says the world was made...*without him nothing was made that was made* (John 1:3-10) and of whom St Paul says that *by him all things were created...he is before all things and in him all things hold together* (Col 1:16-17).

It is in resurrection this Christ enters into the tiniest corner of the universe that you represent –as your special lover, gifting you with the intimate and personal presence of the Comforter protecting your eternal safety and giving you peace. This relationship makes us participants in the very life of the Divine power that sustains everything in the universe. So in the risen Christ the vast infinitude of the Divine presence in all creation comes to us – knowing us better than we know ourselves and calling us by name, The magnificence of all that Christ is now dwells within us via resurrection.

*Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God? (1 Cor 6:19)*

I will mention 3 dimensions that the point to the risen presence and power of Christ.

**First** : Influence of the risen Christ in believers on the grass roots of mainly Western society's general moral development.

It has not been unnoticed that Christ coming into the lives of believers has been a transforming and recreating power since the resurrection that has fed God's way of salt, light and love in to the main stream of society.

H.G. Wells ( who was an historian although better known for his novels such as "The Time Machine") in 1922 wrote of the influence of Jesus.....

*I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very centre of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.*

Tom Holland in his work Dominion writes.....*all those who would call themselves secular humanists and atheists are actually swimming in the very waters of Christianity.*

**Second:** The presence of the creating and sustaining Christ all around us in the universe has been hinted at from secular quarters for many centuries. Isaac Newton 18<sup>th</sup> C physicist and astronomer –believed that the phenomena of the solar system and it's perpetuation and sustainment spoke of a the “ *counsel and dominion of an intelligent being.*”

Brierly in his book The surprising rebirth of belief in God writes of today's vast knowledge and discoveries “..... *the advance of science is a double edges sword. Every time we acquire more knowledge about the world we suddenly perceive how little we know about physical reality. Like*

*an arctic explorer who suddenly realises they are standing on an iceberg, mapping our physical surroundings only makes us realise how much more there is below our feet that we do not comprehend.”*

Christ is in control of the atoms, the particles and quarks upon which the physical universe depends.

Now scientist are talking about Ghost particles which can pass through the barriers of materiality. I think we sort of knew about that already ( Jesus post resurrection appearances).

**But thirdly**: Whilst Christ is the Lord of all, the sustainer of life and everything in the universe – great and small, and the King of and creator of all we see, touch and feel and enjoy, and the artist who invented beauty, and the source of all love, - he is also our redeemer, refresher, renewer, restorer and the lover of our souls.

So if we put these 3 dimensions together we can say that not only are we indwelt by his resurrection presence but we are always surrounded by his resurrection presence in all that we can see know and experience.

I have been very helped in my own life by the realisation that the very first thing that Jesus brought to his disciples in his resurrected presence – was the blessing of peace.

Perhaps this is the most sustaining of all things that the risen Christ brings to us.

Here are some stories of life in Christ bringing peace beyond understanding –transcendent peace :

- Stephen – the first martyr – face like and angel – stoned to death – forgiving his assailants – falling asleep
- Ex prisoner with tattooed face - glowing
- Resident in Knox unable to speak – smiling at songs and scripture whispering that she is blessed

- Solzhenitzyn – Russian dissident – cellmate marking a cross on the floor without words
- Gwen Farquhar - dying bat 105 in joyful serenity

Christ comes to us today in the bread and the wine – and in these elements we are reminded of his body broken and his blood shed. We cannot see his wounds or touch them – but we will one day. Whilst in the bread and the wine there is the solemnity of remembering his suffering, there is also the gift of joy in the anticipation of his rising and knowing that we are alive in him even now because he is risen.