

Luke 24.36-48; Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7.

10:30 am Zoom from St. Andrew's, Vicarage, Totteridge

18th April 2021

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart always be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer (Ps.19:14).

Have you ever been caught in the fog? I'm talking about a really thick, dense fog where you can't see your hands in front of your face. Fog clouds are usually just high levels of water vapour descending low in the atmosphere, but they can be made much worse by weather conditions and pollution.

Back in Victorian times, when everybody burnt house coal in the open fires of their homes - no-one had central heating back then – Londoners used to call these weather events 'a real pea-souper', after a meal that was often eaten by poorer folk – pea soup being a thick green sludge made up of older minced peas and vegetables that you could stand your spoon up in. If there was no wind to blow away the thick dark smoke, then it just hung over the city as a dense poisonous cloud, as thick as pea-soup – and very unhealthy.

But why am I talking about fog? Well, fog turns your world damp, cold and grey. Your vision becomes greatly restricted and everything becomes dull and dark. Sometimes, on motorways, the fog is so thick, cars can't see one another and accidents happen because drivers don't realise that the traffic has stopped up ahead. Life can be a bit like this, with people leading other people astray because they're not thinking of others, being foolish, selfish or just plain mean.

But then, and sometimes quite suddenly, sunbeams start to penetrate through the cloud as its rays heat the air and the fog starts to lift. More light breaks through, piercing the gloom, and then the fog evaporates and disappears. Because you've just emerged from under a cloud, the day seems much brighter than usual, really glorious, and really bright.

This, I think, was what it felt like for the disciples when they began to realise what had happened with Jesus in the resurrection. They had shut themselves in and shut the fullness of life out. They were locked in by a fog of sorrow and fear, sorrow for their lost leader and fearful of the Romans and temple leaders who wanted to punish them for being Jesus-followers and troublemakers. So, all they really wanted to do was to hide.

It was then that he came. He came back from the dead. He came because he was needed, because he wanted to be with them and to guide them. He came to help them. He came to re-establish his friendship with them. He'd been needed for centuries but now was the time – he'd come to transform the world, and he still comes to us now. He comes to chase away our darkness, fear and gloom and to upset the applecarts of greed, complacency and oppression. He comes to bring the brightness of compassion back into our world for every time and place.

Gospels vary, but St Luke has the 11 disciples together and mentions “companions” being present, women followers perhaps? Suddenly, Jesus is there amongst them all, saying, “peace be with you”.

They are in awe. This was the same group who had witnessed the crucifixion and burial - they’d seen him die. Then watched his burial. The first thought was that he must be a ghost, but Jesus tells them not to be afraid or to doubt. He invites them to touch him - to look at his hands and feet. He wants them to know he’s solid, he’s real. They’re still anxious, so he deals with them gently, asking for something to eat. He takes the fish they offer and he eats it in front of them. There’s nothing like sharing a meal to help people come together. And Ghosts don’t need food.

And then Luke uses the term, “he opened their minds”, which I imagine must’ve been a bit like a new dawning in your mind, a sudden revelation of understanding. You know, when someone helps you see the answer to a particularly thorny problem which you hadn’t been able to work out for yourself. Suddenly, it all falls into place and begins to make sense. Like solving a crossword clue you’ve been looking at for days.

They remembered how Jesus had tried to explain to them what would happen to him, but they hadn’t wanted to hear it then. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, and in the full awareness of their own complicity in the crimes inflicted on their friend and teacher, they learn why repentance and forgiveness of sins is so important, and why this is the message they must take to all the nations of the world. To love one another as he had loved them. With Jesus’ message now engraved on their hearts, even the dark post-crucifixion world seemed a rather brighter place.

Spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.