Diocese of Jamaica & the Cayman Islands

Annual Diocesan Synod - 2019

Sermon Preached BY
The Venerable Winston M. Thomas
Administrator, Mandeville Region
 on Friday, April 26

“God is our strength and song, and His salvation ours

Then be his love in Christ proclaimed, with all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord, The Lord your God adore

Stand up and bless his glorious name, Henceforth for evermore.”

+In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

St. Luke 24: 5b “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.”

We are in the Easter Season when we, as the Church, the people of God, celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The fact of the resurrection has turned a group of despairing men and women into a people full of hope, joy and confidence.

Good Friday ended in disaster. The Sabbath was upon the disciples and the women who stood at the cross to witness the sad and tragic events of the day. They hurriedly laid the body of Jesus in the tomb with the plan to return after the Sabbath to embalm the body – to do what they thought would have been their last duty – what we would say today – to bring closure.

Very early the Sunday morning, the women returned to the tomb to carry out the last offices of love and devotion – to bring closure. Going to the tomb, their main concern was who would roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. On their arrival they saw that the stone had been rolled away and two men standing in white, shining apparel asking them the question, “why do you look for the living among the dead?” And they went on to state the fact of the resurrection, reminding them of what Jesus had told them on the four occasions when he predicted his passion. In the evidence given by the four gospels, there were discrepancies as to who the messengers were. But one thing was clear. It was that there was an empty tomb. The body of Jesus was not there. “He is not here; he has risen.” That was a very clear message. The women returned and passed on the message. Peter went to see for himself.

The fact of the resurrection turned a group of despairing men and women into a people full of hope, joy and confidence. The shameful and cowardly Peter was turned into a Peter that became the rock on whose confession of faith the Church of God was to be built.

There are many reactions and responses to Jesus. Some people regard him as the greatest and noblest man who ever lived. Others regard him as a man whose life is to be studied, whose words are to be examined and whose teachings are to be analysed. Still others regard him as the perfect pattern and example. But Jesus is more than that. To think of him in that way is to go to the natural progression – to a death. Jesus is not dead. He is alive. “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” He is a living reality and is present in the lives of you and me. Indeed, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today. You ask me how I know he lives. Because He lives within my heart…within your heart.

Jesus is more than a person whose life is to be studied, whose words are to be examined and whose teachings are to be analysed. We sometimes develop a tendency to think of Christianity and Christ in terms of something to be studied. This tendency sometimes manifests itself in the promotion of the study group at the expense of the Prayer Meeting. Certainly, you will argue with me and say that the study of the Word of God and of the Faith is important. But Jesus is not someone only to be studied. He is someone to be met in his risen power and to be lived with daily in all our circumstances of life. He is, indeed, a living presence. You ask me how I know He lives. Because He lives within my heart…within your heart.

Jesus is not only the perfect pattern and example. He is more than that. He is like the guide – the teacher who guides us and walks with us until we become like what He is. There is the testimony of the hymn writer, “He walks with me and He talks with me, along life’s narrow way.” There is the testimony of the Psalmist, “Even though I walk through a valley as dark as death, I fear no evil, for you are with me . . . “ and again the Psalmist says, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

Not only is He the pattern and example, He also helps us, guides us and strengthens us to follow that pattern and example. He is not only a model for life, He is also a living presence to help us in our living. You ask me how I know He lives. Because He lives within my heart…within your heart.

Yesterday Jesus died for you and for me – that is history. Today, He lives for you and for me – this is victory. Let us look for Jesus as our risen and triumphant Lord and Saviour.

+And now to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed to Him all honour and glory and power which are his most just due both now and always. Amen.