

From the Rector's Study ~

That Jesus was raised from the dead is, in itself, a fantastic possibility to ponder. To consider that a person who was dead and lay in the grave for three days (or thereabouts), then sparked to life again, is a startling thing to consider. Alone as a phenomenon, Jesus' resurrection is an intriguing occurrence. Rather like claims of the paranormal or cryptozoic, it is by itself either a curiosity or a ridiculous claim. To be more than either, Jesus' resurrection cannot be something that people merely observe clinically, or imagine, or analyze.

Author and former Church of England Bishop, the late John V. Taylor wrote in his book, *The Incarnate God*, that, "The resurrection of Jesus came upon his friends like a slow dawning. Apart from the crowd of over 500 which Paul reports [1 Corinthians 15:6] it was in ones and twos and in small groups that they came to believe he was still alive....They could not keep it to themselves, but it was the most impossible secret to shout from the housetops. How could anyone else believe it?"

That Jesus was raised from the dead is a curiosity. It is something either believed or not, just like many claims that people make. But there is something that sets this claim apart. Jesus' resurrection has an affect upon people unlike other source of such fantastical claims.

Taylor continues, "Whatever 'happened' that morning, while it was still dark, this is the way Easter was experienced. It is still the only way in which Easter is experienced. What happens is that, in ones and twos and small groups, people come to know that Jesus is alive. They cannot prove it. They cannot argue it. They cannot explain it. As far as they are concerned they do not need to." For people like these, people like us, Jesus resurrection is an experience that grabs us, perhaps an experience of the soul as indefinite as it may be to put it this way. Jesus is not a memory, not a teaching, not an ideal. Not an artifact of the past, Jesus is present here and now and eternally in every sense of the term. Jesus is a person, surely enough, but Jesus also redefines or clarifies personhood for us all.

We may feel that we cannot prove or argue for Jesus' resurrection in any convincing way, perhaps that we do not need to do so. It is true that, unless people are themselves grasped by the experience and its strange

persuasion, they simply cannot believe that Jesus is risen. We may also recognize that the only convincing evidence we Christians have to offer is the quality of our relationship with one another and with the people around us in the world.

Taylor puts it wonderfully: "...the aliveness of Jesus does flow into the strangely fearless, strangely honest, strangely caring and accepting relationship which sometimes and in some places is to be found among Christians. It actually happens far too infrequently, alas, but when it does appear there is nothing else quite like it. It is a distinct quality of love....This special quality of love and aliveness is always recognizable. It when people [experience] this and drawn to it that dawns on them also that Jesus is alive."

The strangeness of the love among people who follow Jesus is our own. In comparison to the ethos often at work in the systems and societies around us, in which we ourselves live and move, our way is strange indeed. My pray is that we here at ECR and we in all the Church will embrace our call to be strange, to be loving, caring, welcoming, not just accepting but celebrating, people. When people experience the presence of love, love alive and well amidst our community, they experience the very presence of Christ. Christ is risen indeed, and the presence of Christ is found in each of us, one hopes, and in all of us together, one knows.

The dynamic of the Love of God manifest in Christ and Christ, thus God's Love manifest in us, is what moves the resurrection of Jesus from the category of fantastic curiosity to that of profound meaning and life-changing event. God's call to us is to continue in ourselves the incarnation of God's Love begun in Jesus. A serious responsibility, it is also a joyful manner of life that God enables us to embrace the instant we sense God's call to adopt it as our own.

May people continue to find us strange here at ECR, strangely warm, strangely welcoming, strangely different from communities they have met elsewhere. May we embrace our call to follow the strange ways of Jesus to rise up and to be raised up by God.

God's Peace. *Jim +*