

Sermon 4th Sunday of Easter 2016

Today we are challenged by John's Gospel, along with the religious leaders of the time, to put aside our religion and confess our faith. It's much easier to go to church on a Sunday, to abide by the conventions of religion, than to live with a God who will not be kept in a box.

Many religious people then and now, manage to tame their God until he doesn't really make a lot of difference in their lives and their choices. But Jesus shows us the face of the living God, who does not allow that – a choice has to be made that is life changing and life enhancing. But we have to make the decision. A decision to embark on an adventure with God, a journey that will take us in unexpected directions and situations, but will end with life with God for eternity as described by the Book of Revelations.

The terrible fact that some people will choose not to believe runs through John's Gospel, and the Bible as a whole. In situations, like the one described here, where those who reject God are

those who should know him best, it is especially poignant. This passage is not just a warning to the Jews but also to Christians; we cannot know and understand God, he takes our plans and messes them up, he takes our lives and we move like a ship in full sail at the mercy of the wind.

So, if we take Jesus' advice to his questioners and examine his life, the signs and miracles he performs, what do we see? We see a servant king, who has love and great compassion for people, especially those who are rejected by society. We find someone who forgives and frees imprisoned souls from guilt and sickness, someone who can feed and refresh body and soul. We find someone who can defeat death himself and bring others back to life.

We see his disciples working in the power of the Spirit continuing his work. Peter's approach to Tabitha is reminiscent of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter and we see throughout the Book of Acts how ordinary people can be transformed

and empowered through the gift of the Spirit following Jesus' death.

We too can continue this resurrection work, we are members of the body of Christ, we can have these powers if we admit that Jesus is our Saviour and claim the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us we can do all that he did and more, we need to get on and do it, to claim our authority that has been given to us.

Jesus Christ is one with God and is our salvation. We are helped to see the truth of the Resurrection as we see Jesus' work continuing through the members of his body, the church, us if we answer his call and spread the good news all over the world and for all time.

God has paid a great price to claim us as his own. He wants to work through us, each and every one of us has a place in his plan, even if we don't understand it yet. Stand before God, accept his forgiveness and salvation and allow him to reveal your part in his great plan. You are worthy, you are loved, you will receive the power and the skills you need as have many

others before you. Expect your life to change, it will not always be comfortable, but you will be challenged and you will feel his love and compassion.