

St Marc Grenoble

Sunday 11th April 2021 (Easter 2)

**Acts 4: 32 - 35**

**Psalm 133**

**John 20: 19 - 31**

**'Belief and Testimony'**

### **Good Morning - Let's Pray**

Alleluia the Lord is Risen!! - **He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!!**

I wonder if you thought that exclamation was just for Easter Day??

Well, you see, Jesus rose from the grave once - but remains our still risen Saviour for eternity!!

So, He is risen today and every day - and we must remember that. But, especially when the going gets tough, which it will for all of us from time to time - we must remember Jesus is Alive! He is risen, He loves us and He will continue to be with us throughout our lives - especially during the tough times. Alleluia!!

And, just to get this clear in our minds, let's look closely at today's Gospel reading:

The very first thing to notice in this reading is that John is sending a clear, but coded, message in verse 19.

It is the way John works: He refers to 'that day - the first day of the week' ... he's telling us, in his coded way, that this day was, and is, a vitally important day - it is the beginning of a new era, a new covenant cycle - the day of Jesus resurrection! So, John is saying to us - as I am saying to you 'Listen up!!'

John tells us that the disciples were 'fearful' – not really surprising after what the Jews had done to Jesus, their rabbi, their master. So the doors were shut, and locked!

But Jesus came – and He brought **four gifts** with Him

### **What was His first gift??**

His first gift was peace – the peace which passes all understanding? We're told He came and stood in the middle of them; and His first words were "Peace be with you". Jesus brought His lasting gift of Peace. - When our lives are turning upside down, it is that gift of peace we must ask for, and cling to - it is life changing and life preserving.

But, we're told, He did something else at this point - He showed them the scars on His hands and His side - just to make sure they were quite certain it was Him - He proved it – by showing them His scars (it says in 1 Peter - by His wounds we are healed)

We're told the disciples were 'Overjoyed'...

### **So what was His second gift??**

His second gift was Joy - Joy when they saw their master. Joy that their Lord, - our Lord, had not abandoned them, and does not abandon us! He is ALWAYS with us so we should always delight in his joy!!

### **What was His third gift??**

A commission, Jesus said, 'As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you' Jesus sent the disciples out to share the Good News, the Gospel!

And, to be crystal clear, as His modern day disciples, Jesus is sending all of us out too ... There is no other reason I would be here in Grenoble, except that Jesus sent me here! (I was supposed to be retired - but Jesus called me and sent me!!) **So, where is He sending you??**

As Julie Andrews sang in 'The Sound of Music' - Let's start at the very beginning. First step - are you a real, committed member of this church - His church, of His English speaking disciples here in Grenoble??

If so, **are you baptised?** - If not, why not?? Are you sitting on the fence? Our Saviour died for you too!! We are offering baptism again next month, NOW is the time to make your commitment!

And, if you are baptised, do you have a voice, in the running of the church?

### **Are you on the Electoral Roll - if not WHY NOT??**

Do not leave here today without filling in the necessary form of commitment TODAY! - I will be standing at the door with the forms!

## **What did Jesus do next??**

We're told He breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit!'

## **So, what was His fourth gift?? - The Gift of the Holy Spirit!!**

Why did they need the Holy Spirit?? To empower and equip them to preach, heal and to proclaim the love, and the forgiveness Jesus brings.

Many of us find it difficult to proclaim the Gospel, because we're shy, or we're afraid we may make fools of ourselves; but the Holy Spirit will equip us, help and enable us to do that.

And you can start right here - in the safety of this church. Right now we're looking for people who will help lead our services, read our readings and lead our prayers ... never done it before? Maybe now is the time to start

... I will be offering training, and you just have to give me your name, and phone number to sign up.

**Remember when Jesus calls YOU, the Holy Spirit will equip YOU!!**

But, what about Thomas? What was going on with Him?

Have you ever been the odd one out in a group? I have. It's not nice is it? Thomas wasn't there when Jesus came the first time. The others said: 'We've seen the Master!' ... Yeah! Pull the other one! Said Thomas 'Honestly – we have.' 'Well I won't believe it - unless I can put my fingers in His wounds,' said Thomas, 'Otherwise I'm not going to believe it!'

Jesus understands doubts – honest doubts are OK - we all get them!  
A week later, same place, Jesus returns. This time Thomas is with them

'Peace be with you!' says Jesus. 'Come on Thomas, bring your finger here. Inspect my hands and side for yourself. Don't doubt it any more! Just believe!' 'Oh Lord! replied Thomas, 'My Master and my God!'

Do you know? The first time in John's Gospel anyone addresses Jesus as God - it's Thomas, right there. No doubts!

'Is it because you've seen me you believe?' Asked Jesus 'Well, God bless those who don't see and yet believe!'

Jesus understands if we doubt; He sends the Holy Spirit to resource us and to help us believe. Whatever it takes!

So, if like Thomas, you have any doubts, just explain to Jesus what the problem is; and, in my personal experience, the Holy Spirit will always help us to believe!

The biggest step of faith comes in asking for help. The next step is to be faithful enough to open your heart to the Holy Spirit ... and let Him do the rest.

And there's one other thing, in the Acts reading we're told the Apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power; and great grace was upon all of them - they worked together and they shared everything together.

Faith in the Lord Jesus changes lives - mine, yours, all who turn to Him. Then, having changed us, He uses us to do His work ...

So, remember the four gifts Jesus gave the disciples then, which He still gives us now:

**His peace**, peace which passes all understanding

**His Joy** - joy that He is always with us whatever happens

**His Commission** - He's looking for our commitment to serving Him

**His Holy Spirit** to be with us, to equip and empower us ...

**So, Listen up and Listen out for your call...**

And, as I close, let's Pray - and ask God to fill us with his Holy Spirit ...

