

## Sermon Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### John 20:19-31 and Acts 5:27-32

Good Morning and I trust I find you well. Let us pray 'Heavenly Father strengthen our belief and help us to open our hearts and lives to your word.' Amen.

We live in a world of very confusing stories or reasoning; if one body says this is the reason there is always without fail a conspiracy theory saying the opposite or putting forward a spurious theory. Look at this week alone when the television presenter Eamon Holmes gave credence on air to some untruths about covid 19 and its cause. Rightly he had to apologise but why believe it in the first place?

The readings today for me are all about belief, belief in Jesus Christ and God the Father and how that changes lives. The reading from Acts is all about belief and why the disciples were doing what they were doing preaching in Jesus' name and at the same time making the Jewish leaders look bad, hence the reason why they wanted them to stop.

Peter is very clear in **VERSE 29 'WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN.'** The disciples had witnessed all that Jesus did and had seen Him again after He had risen from the grave and it was the Holy Spirit which Jesus had breathed on the disciples or gave the disciples, as we are told verse 22 from the reading from John, through which they were doing God's work. It is the stubbornness of the Jewish leaders here and in previous accounts in the Bible of being afraid to believe in Jesus.

I know we human beings can be very stubborn and in the account in John's Gospel we meet this human stubbornness in the form of Thomas, who had to see the crucifixion wounds on Jesus' body and

touch them. He was not doubting, he needed hard evidence, a very human trait. However, when he sees Jesus he is told to stop doubting and his first words are 'My Lord and God.' How wonderful it would be to see Jesus' in the way Thomas and the disciples and the other followers saw Jesus after His resurrection. However, this cannot be, so where is the evidence? In the Biblical accounts and other writings to name just a few but look at verse 29 'Because you have seen me you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' Jesus for me is represented in the Spiritual sense, the Holy Spirit, given as a gift of God at Pentecost and in my own belief in Him and God the Father.

Many of us have doubts about our faith, I think we'd be lying to say we did not. For me doubt can lead to a stronger faith. I am no mathematician but I have a simple formula 'Doubt equals Question equals Answer.' When I have doubts, I try to find the answer through prayer, study and asking others; inevitably I am led to the answer and inevitably more questions. Faith for me has to be a continuing process, as I believe that we must all strive to grow and strengthen our Christian faith or belief. I am not a complete faith package and would argue strongly with anyone who said they were; we all need to believe and continue to grow in our faith.

So, doubt can make our faith deeper and stronger and we are blessed and saved by God, without seeing a physical Jesus. Over the centuries many have struggled with belief and I want to finish with a quote by Augustine 4<sup>th</sup> century writing about how he speaks to God and his experience. Augustine writes 'You called me, you cried aloud to me, you broke my barrier of deafness. You shone upon me, your radiance enveloped me, you put my blindness to flight. You shed your fragrance about me; I drew breath and now I gasp for your

sweet odour. I tasted you and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me and I am inflamed with love of your peace.'

God will meet you, as he did with Thomas and Augustine and many others, when we have doubt. Amen.