

**SUNDAY OF THE PASSION (PALM SUNDAY) YEAR C**  
**1 April, 2007**

1. That very unpleasant Dickens character in David Copperfield, Uriah Heep, fawned over his visitors while he described himself, 'We are so very 'umble'. Unfortunately humility has a bad name and that is probably because none of us likes to be humiliated and also because humility is misunderstood. On Palm Sunday, the focus is humility—Jesus' humility and ours. So what is humility?
2. Humility is not putting down oneself or letting oneself be put down by others, rather it is affirmation brought about by the power of the Spirit of God to enable us to be the light of the world. This cannot be achieved by self-centredness. Humility is allowing oneself to express one's beliefs in a manner which is not controlled by oneself or self-conscious. It is being open to do God's will; and this is what we pray for every day—"Your will be done" The New Testament speaks of this as 'having the mind of Christ'. Christ's humility is described in Phil.2.5-11. Humility involves two simple things: servanthood and obedience to God.
3. In four short passages the writer of the Second Isaiah captured a picture of the perfect Servant of God. In today's Isaiah 50.4-9a we see the humility of the teacher whose role is to respond to the needs of the learner; the humility of the servant enduring suffering knowing that he is obeying God. The Gospel reading, Luke 22.14-23.56 shows us the complete humility of Jesus—deserted and denied by his friends, mocked and beaten, unjustly accused and tried, sentenced to death and crucified. This was complete submission to the will of God. In literature, in the movies, in life, we might expect opposition, outrage, revenge, but Jesus knew, in the words of Isaiah, "The Lord God helps me", "he who vindicates me is near". His humility and submission to the will of his Father was vindicated and the resurrection is made glorious by the overcoming of evil.
4. We cannot make ourselves humble by a single act. Others cannot make you humble even though they humiliate you. Humility comes by growing in discipleship, having the mind of Christ, serving others and loving them unconditionally and always listening to hear God's words and responding to his will.

**EASTER DAY**  
**8 April, 2007**

1. **The greatest evidence of the resurrection of Christ** today is the Church itself. The Church came into being to give witness to the resurrection of Christ. Its continued witness down the ages is testament to the fact of the risen Lord whose Spirit empowers us. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor. 15.17). The Church continues these two millennia after the resurrection because we do believe that Christ rose from death.
2. **Our faith depends on it.** The NT books bear testament to it. The significance of Christmas cannot be complete without the knowledge that the child is the one God raised from the dead; Good Friday would be the memorial of a martyr's death; the Lord's Supper is nonsense unless the risen Lord is known in the breaking of the bread. And the Church itself would not remain if it were just a society.
3. **We are the people of the resurrection.** This is what sustains us, this is what gives us hope, this is the good news we have to bring to our communities. The church must reflect the fact that it is a community committed to a particular answer to why we, and the universe, are here. The goal is the Kingdom of God when all things will be gathered up in Christ.
  - We are a people of forgiveness, both forgiven and forgiving, made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection.
  - We believe that the reign of God is experienced in peace and justice, forgiveness and mercy, patience and kindness, love and faith.
  - We are a people of hope and our mission is to bring hope to a world which is often dispirited, often self-centred and greedy, often impatient and vengeful.
  - We are a people who know that the object of our life is service, loving God and loving our neighbour .
4. In our ministering communities we need to look again at how our Christian community orders its life around Kingdom values, how we celebrate, demonstrate and proclaim the Kingdom. Our life and our mission are one.— being resurrection people, proclaiming the resurrection, and bringing the reality of resurrection to others.

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**29 April, 2007**

1. **Today is called Good Shepherd Sunday.** The image of the good shepherd is one of our favourites, for as it is developed in several ways in the Scriptures we are always given strong encouragement and assurances of hope.
2. **Psalm 23** is a much-loved song of trust and hope in God. It promises God's providence, guidance, protection, nourishment, healing, and assurance of dwelling with him forever. **John 10.22-30** Jesus speaks of the sheep who belong to him, and their enjoyment of eternal life already in the life of discipleship. Three times that eternal life is promised: they will never perish, no-one will snatch them out of my hand, and ... no-one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. "My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me" shows that to hear and respond to Jesus is the decisive factor which determines our acceptance to God at the last judgment. **The vision in Revelation 7.9-17** is also a promise of eternal life and one which gave great hope to those who faced persecution and martyrdom in the early Church. It promises shelter and fulfillment, no more suffering and guidance to springs of living water.
3. **How do we hear these promises today?** We don't suffer from poverty and famine, we are not fearful of persecution, the violence of war is far from our shores—perhaps we don't respond at all to the promise of heaven.. But there is not one of us who is broken or suffering in some way. Those who turn to the Shepherd to guide, sustain, and protect will be led to springs of eternal life, and will know the peace which comes from forgiveness of sins, and the joy which comes from service., and will have the hope of life forever with the Lord, both here and in the world to come. This assurance is what sustains us in faith, in worship and in service.
4. **The Good Shepherd speaks to us.** Listen for his voice through the scriptures, in the words of others, in the silence of prayer. The Good Shepherd knows us. We are individuals intimately one with him in Baptism. He knows us by name. he calls us to follow him and in that promise is eternal life. May the hope of God's promise sustain us through whatever trials and tribulations we may experience

**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**22 April, 2007**

1. **Psalm 30**, originally an individual's rejoicing in his deliverance from death, became a psalm of national thanksgiving associated with the restoration of the temple after the Maccabean wars. In Christian usage, the "I" becomes Christ and his deliverance from death in resurrection. The psalm sums up our mood in this season.
2. **This psalm could have been said wholeheartedly by Peter.** Imagine him, distraught after the crucifixion, confused by the appearances of Jesus, disappointed at the seeming failure of Jesus' mission, going back to what he knew before—fishing—only to find that that was a lost cause too. Imagine his surprise at the miracle of the full net, his cry of delight, "It is the Lord!" and his jumping in the sea. "You have turned my lamentation into dancing: you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with joy." (John 21.1-19)
3. **This psalm could have been said wholeheartedly by Paul.** Imagine him, struck down on the road and blinded, traumatized for three days. Imagine the fulfillment of a vision and the regaining of sight. "You have turned my lamentation into dancing; ..." (Acts 9. 1-6).
4. **The psalm can be said wholeheartedly by Christians through the ages**, by Christians today, by us in this congregation. Consider those times in your life when you could praise God with those same words; "You have turned my lamentation into dancing..." - times when you have said or done something and you have received forgiveness, times when things looked black and you were given a second chance, times when you felt unloved but you experienced God's comfort etc. These are our own small resurrections for which we give thanks and praise. But above all we give thanks for eternal life
5. **And so we come to John's vision of heaven** in Rev. 5.6-14. Here every creature, the whole earth, acknowledges the redemption of God through Christ, and gives joyous thanks and praise for the redemption won by Christ in his death and resurrection—myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands in the kingdom of God, rejoicing in God's salvation. This vision sustains us here on earth. Power and honour and glory and might are God's and God will reign and his kingdom will come.

**SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**15 April, 2007**

1. **Here we are a week after the resurrection** and in John 20.19-31 we join with the disciples on the same day. Fear overwhelmed the men (and possibly women) as they grappled with the mystery of Jesus. His appearance through a locked door and yet the instruction to see his wounded hands and side added to the enigma of resurrection. He breathed the life of the new creation into them just as God had breathed life into Adam. He, authorized them for a ministry of forgiveness..
2. **We witness the power of the Spirit** and that authority when we read Acts 5.27-32. Peter was emboldened to challenge Jewish officials who previously had him quaking with fear. He was able to speak powerfully the simple facts of God's action in Jesus: his death, resurrection, and the purpose of it all: forgiveness of sins
3. **We don't know where Thomas was that Sunday** evening but the testimony of the others was not enough for him. Interestingly he did seek their company the next week, and then Jesus won him over with a very personal encounter. The gospel writer's addendum in vv.30-31 is meant for those Christians of decades later who had no personal account of the risen Lord but relied on the testimony of those who had gone before. There are several things we can note in this incident:  
i. Doubt may best be explored in Christian community. Despite his doubts, Thomas remained with the others.  
ii. Each person needs to say for him/herself "My Lord and my God!" in the light of personal experience.  
iii. The resurrection is a mystery and we cannot explain the nature of the risen body, although we can notice the strength gained by believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit and know the forgiveness of sin.
4. **And here we are two thousand years later.** In our Christian communities there still may be fear and doubt. But it is to such a community that Christ will come to say "peace be with you". We may still not understand the resurrection but we can know the power of the Spirit and the freedom of forgiveness so that we too can be empowered for ministry. The Church began with a few people in a room. In our communities we may still be few but we don't need to cower behind locked doors for we can go out authorized to speak of Christ's resurrection and the power of the Spirit to forgive sins.