

Sunday Thought

18th April 2021 Third Sunday of Easter

Readings

Acts 3: 12 - 19

Psalm 4

1 John 3:1 - 7

Luke 24: 36b - 48

Completing the Puzzle



These past days we have listened to many tributes to the life and work of the late Duke of Edinburgh. Around the world people have recognised the many and varied achievements of his long life. They have spoken of his keen intellect and his awareness of human need across all strata of society, especially among young people and how it was all undergirded by a firm, enquiring Christian faith. I like to think that sometime in the story of the early church similar tributes would have been offered in memory of Doctor Luke who wrote two of today's Bible passages. Luke was also a man of wide learning, deep compassion, enquiring mind and a real personal faith in the King to whom he had promised his allegiance.

A native of Antioch in Syria, Luke became a close companion of the apostle Paul, possibly assisting him medically. With his mixed Jewish and Gentile background Luke would surely have involved his friend in many rich discourses about life and faith and the role of the church in contemporary social and political issues. It is obvious from his writing of the Gospel and the story of the first churches that the '*Beloved Physician*' had an important part to play in making the Gospel relevant for the next and subsequent generations.

We can see from the two scriptures today that Luke, among his many other interests, was a keen historian. God used that gift. Luke saw clearly that the death and resurrection of Jesus was like the vital piece in the puzzle of God's great work of loving and renewing his world. He recalls Jesus' words in the Upper Room in Jerusalem and also Peter echoing those words when speaking in the Temple after a lame man is healed in the name of Jesus.

The Lord tells his disciples how everything which had happened had been foretold – especially through the law and the prophets. It all fitted together with this one piece – Christ - his Cross and his Glory! Now the rest of the puzzle is clear – a picture of the Church and God’s growing Kingdom. Through Jesus’ resurrection conquest of death people will learn of the gracious love of God – will want to change their lives to be like his and go on to share that life with others. Soul by soul, changed lives will be the way the Kingdom grows, spreading across the world -place by place, generation by generation until history is complete and Jesus is recognised as Lord in the glory of God the Father.

There are still those who question Luke’s historical perspective of the Kingdom of God. They say ‘*You have the key piece of the puzzle but there are still more pieces missing! How can all this Kingdom growth happen?*’ Again, Jesus tells them and us; *You will be given God’s power. Wait for the Spirit!*’ They did wait and with the arrival of the Pentecost festival they found the Spirit of God enabling them. More of that in a few weeks’ time!

We have so much more for which to thank Luke. He made some important faith discoveries. Not least about the compassion of Jesus – his love for the lost, outcasts, the oppressed, the poor, young people and children, the racially and sexually disadvantaged..... It’s all there in Luke’s gospel story. We call this *the grace of God* – his amazing love which takes the initiative and comes to find us just as we are , where we are and when we need him. That, Luke relates, is just how Jesus came to disciples in the Upper Room after his resurrection with their doubts, questions, fears ... HE is the vital piece in their puzzle ... The rest is history!

In this time of making tributes I pay mine to Paul’s *Beloved Doctor* – for all he did to make Jesus and his Kingdom real for his generation – and for ours.



A Prayer of a Child of God (from thoughts about 1 John 3: 1 – 7)

Father God,
I’ve been thinking about Jesus on the Cross and his Resurrection.
I marvel again at your incredible love for all people – and me!
I am amazed that when I respond to your love you call me to be your
child – one of your family, sharing the likeness of Jesus.

That’s not always easy because it means being different;
Sometimes other people seem to reject me like they did Jesus.

I want to keep working at being like him though.
Help me to grow closer to you in a clean and loving life
which will help others to know they can be ‘family’ too.