

Something to hold on to

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Acts 2:14a, 22-32 and John 20:19-end

Today we read about Peter's Spirit-filled preaching of the Gospel message to the crowd in Jerusalem. A close reading reveals that he isn't telling people what they should believe or how they should live, so much as bearing witness to Christ's birth, life and death as the fulfilment of prophecy and the working out of God's saving promise to humankind. It's up to the individual listener to accept it or not, and many of them do. By verse 41, which is part of next Sunday's reading, we learn that, "Those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added". Peter's words, which referred to the prophecy they would have known and longed to see fulfilled, gave his listeners something tangible to hold on to, and they believed.

In John's Gospel we meet the resurrected Christ, who confronts Thomas' doubts head on. Do we imagine that Jesus was somehow ghost-like after his death and resurrection – a kind of hologram, perhaps? Yet Thomas is invited to "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side." Even after death, Jesus is a physical presence among the disciples – the real, tangible working out of God's promise. He is the fulfilment of ancient prophecy and much more besides.

In accepting the message they heard from Peter and in being baptised those three thousand people became the physical body of Christ. And so it is today, here, over two thousand years later. Jesus is physically present among and within us, the body of Christ. Let's just allow the awesome reality of that to sink in. 🙏



Resurrected Lord, ever present among us, teach me to accept the amazing responsibility of being your body, your hands, your feet on earth. Amen.

Stations of the resurrection

Station 13:
Thomas meets his Lord

by Richard Greatrex

The disciples' need for certainty is focused now on one man – Thomas. He probably wasn't the only one with doubts, nor the only one requiring concrete, physical proof. He was just the one out of the room when Jesus first appeared. So his doubt provides a second opportunity for them all to be convinced.

Scripture doesn't say whether Thomas actually puts his fingers in the scars, or his hand into the spear wound. Whatever occurs is enough to elicit Thomas' declaration: "My Lord and my God!" Whether he makes this response on behalf of the whole group or it is his own personal insight is not easy to tell. Certainly, the pool of believers who encounter the resurrected Jesus is growing – first Mary Magdalene, then John and Peter, now Thomas. Each has much more to fathom, for revelation is only a beginning; how you make it live and breathe in your own being is what counts. 🙏



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Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

A year ago my ninety-two-year-old mum died. She lived with us and my dad on the smallholding in a wooden cabin. She loved animals and birds and took delight in holding whatever new creature had been hatched or born here. She herself was tiny and had little strength but she

had a fierceness in her love of the natural world that was inspiring.

She died in the middle of our lambing season, having rejoiced in the ones that were born. After she died there were more that she would never see but I know she would have loved them. She's buried in the chapelyard at the top of our lane, a woman of no religious allegiance, but now surrounded by the wild flowers and creatures she loved.

If God is present on the smallholding in all aspects then God has also embraced her in her fierce love of creation. 🙏

“ There is no one who is insignificant in the purpose of God.

Alistair Begg (born 1952), US pastor