

This Jesus whom God raised up
Bible reading: Acts 2.22-39

Peter said: This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. (Acts 2.32)

If you had to choose one verse from each chapter we read, which one would it be? From ch.1, v.14 sticks out for me. Here are 120 people in lockdown, waiting behind closed doors for — what? Nobody knows. So *they were constantly devoting themselves to prayer*. It reminds me of that lovely phrase from the psalms about ‘waiting on God’. Not passive resignation but active *waiting*: being attentive, waiting to see what God has to reveal. It takes time for the unfolding of God’s purpose to become clear. I can think of a few things that are becoming clearer, as our lockdown continues: the things I was anxious about that turned out to be no big deal; the unexpected blessings that turn out to be really important. How about you?

Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost is part of that process of attentiveness: thinking aloud, working out what it all means. How does *this* stuff that’s happening to us relate to *that* stuff that God’s already revealed to us in Scripture (v.16)? When the disciples met the risen Jesus on Easter Day, he *opened their minds to understand the scriptures* (Luke 24.27, 45-46) — and set their hearts on fire (Luke 24.32). That’s one of the major themes of Acts, as we shall see. Lots of new things are happening: but every step has to be tested against the tried and tested truths of scripture. But the reverse is true as well. Tried and tested truths that we’ve always relied on are re-read in surprising ways in light of the new things that God is doing in our midst.

And at the centre of everything is Jesus himself: risen, ascended, glorified. He died a brutal death: but *God freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power* (v.24). The place of greatest shame and failure, humanly speaking, is the place where God’s grace breaks in and transforms the situation. Psalm 16 provides the key (vv.25-31). David’s words were not literally true of David himself (you could see his tomb down the Kidron valley). They were prophetic words, designed to be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, great David’s greater Son.

But proof-texts are no use without proof-people. The most powerful witness to the resurrection of Jesus is its effect in the lives of Peter and his friends (v.32). The gift of the Spirit is itself the evidence that Jesus has “got through” to the throne of heaven and reconnected the channels of communication between heaven and earth (v.33). And from that interconnection flows the life-giving possibility of *forgiveness* (v.38), a promise *for you, and for your children, and for all those who are far away* (v.39).

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow:
 Because he lives, all fear is gone:
 Because I know he holds the future,
 And life is worth the living, just because he lives.*

God bless, Loveday