

# 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

## READ: JOHN 20:19-31

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Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands..."

## REFLECT:

Today's Gospel story takes place in a familiar context: the disciples are huddled inside a house, and have locked the doors for fear of the danger outside. They are, understandably, traumatised by all that has happened. They're confused and dismayed by accounts of the empty tomb. They can't bring themselves to believe Mary's incredible tale of meeting the risen Jesus early that morning.

Suddenly, Jesus is standing among them.

The resurrection stories give an intriguing picture of the risen Jesus' form. He appears and disappears at will. Enters locked rooms as if by

magic. But despite these ghost-like abilities, he has a physical body. He eats, he touches and is touched, he breathes.

And, perhaps most interesting of all, he is wounded. His hands bear the marks of the nails, and there is still a gaping hole in his side where the sword pierced him. As one preacher puts it, "resurrection is not reversal." What has happened hasn't been undone or erased. It has been integrated, transformed and redeemed.

A bit like those first disciples, we're still for the most part shut in our houses. The world outside remains dangerous. There is fear about what the next few weeks and months may hold. Good news has reached us, about the numbers heading in the right direction, about the vaccine proving effective, but can we trust it? Some of us still have our doubts. That's OK. Jesus comes to meet us where we are.

I wonder if there's a message for us in this passage about what resurrection promises. We still talk, longingly, about things "going back to normal." We forget that that "normal" was what got us into this mess in the first place. All that has happened can't be undone. Millions of people have died. Millions of families are bereaved. Livelihoods have been lost. Those who have cared for the sick and for the dead are traumatized by all they have witnessed.

All of this must be acknowledged and held, and integrated into a future that incorporates learning and healing. Everything will be different now. This needs to be true, so that all that has been lost is not in vain. So that something can be redeemed from this. So that new life can emerge.

## CONNECT:

Some questions to ponder and pray about:

- What role might our churches play in the healing, integration and learning needed?
- How can we minister to our wider communities in the months and years ahead?
- What will new life look like, for us?

## PRAY:

- That in our haste to return to familiar patterns of worship we will not miss opportunities to reimagine our worship and ministry
- That we will have a role to play in our communities to promote healing and learning
- For peace in the midst of our fear and doubt
- For the Holy Spirit to lead and equip us

## RESOURCES AND CONTACTS:

Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website: [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)

Pauline and myself, and your elders, are here for you if you need someone to talk to, have a prayer request, or just fancy a chat! Ping us an email or give us a ring.